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MILLICENT NEVILLE.

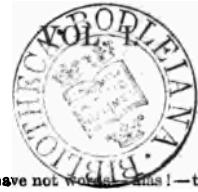
MILLICENT NEVILLE:

A Novel.

By JULIA TILT,

AUTHOR OF "MAY HAMILTON," "THE OLD PALACE," "LAURA TALBOT," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.



"I have not wholly sinn'd!—to tell
The loveliness of loving well!"

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

LONDON:

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MILLICENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE REJECTION.

"No hope, Millicent?—not one word? Oh, Milly! and I have loved you so long!"

These despairing words were uttered by a young man, apparently about five-and-twenty; and the object to whom they were addressed was a beautiful girl of eighteen.

Yes, beautiful: I repeat the word, and challenge the whole world to dispute the fact which I am going to set forth; namely, that a beautiful heroine and an undiscoverable mystery form two great ingredients of a readable novel.

And to prove the truth of my assertion, I will just ask the public at large a few questions.

"What do you read a novel for?"

"In hopes of being amused," answer all the younger portion of my readers.

"To derive instruction also, as well as amusement," puts in some sage matron or respectable dowager.

"To pass away time," cries some inveterate idler.

"And what would the novel be, my friend, without a beautiful heroine or some undiscoverable mystery?"

"Oh, good for nothing," answer all in a breath.

Therefore, having put the question to the vote, and finding that I am right, I beg to state that my present heroine, Millicent Morley, is decidedly a beauty — the mystery, dear readers, will come all in good time — and that her cousin, Mr. Norman Austin, a very good-looking, handsome young man, is precisely of my opinion. Having thus briefly introduced them, I will continue their conversation. Norman had just made the despairing speech that opens this chapter, and Millicent, with a world of pity in her sweet eyes, was looking as if she devoutly wished herself a hundred miles off.

For she had received an offer of marriage (only it was at present a profound secret, having but occurred in the early part of the day on which my story opens) from the man of her heart, the very being in whom, and for whom, every fibre of her young spirit was bound up; and it was the unpropitious moment when her whole soul was wrapt up in a delicious reverie, in which she endeavoured to recall each word and look of the beloved object of her affections, that Mr. Norman Austin chose for making known his unfortunate attachment.

Now nothing (save having none at all) is so tiresome to a woman as having two offers at once,—the more so if she really entertain a sort of liking for the rejected one. And Millicent entertained more than a sort of liking for Norman Austin; she loved him with true sisterly and cousinly affection; and it is more than probable (though, doubtless, the feminine portion of my readers will be shocked at the idea) that, had she not met Mr. Eustace Neville, she would have accepted Mr. Norman Austin.

But of course, under the circumstances, instead of thinking of anything approach-

ing acceptance, she was rapidly turning over in her mind the surest and least painful method of dismissing him; and so wrapt was she in her inward cogitations, that she kept turning round and round a small gold ring with a ruby heart that encircled one of her taper fingers, heedless of the despairing blue eyes that were fixed with such an honest, open, confiding expression upon her face.

"You do not answer, Millicent. Oh, Millicent! do not turn away your face! Can it be true — can it be possible — that you really——"

Here the agitated young man suddenly broke off, for Millicent raised her head, and he read in the pure depths of her earnest eyes a direct denial to his suit. He stopped abruptly, and gazed upon her as she essayed to speak, as if his very life hung upon her words.

"Dear Norman——" and Millicent's voice, always like a silver bell, sounded still sweeter than ever from the soft pity infused into its tones; "Dear Norman, I am so sorry—I am, indeed."

She stopped, gathered courage, and added:—

"I cannot be yours, indeed I cannot; I like you—love you—very, very much, but—but—I never thought of you in this way—never—never."

"Oh!" cried Norman, inexpressibly relieved; "oh, if it is only that—if you can't say yes at once—I will wait. I don't want to hurry you, dear, darling Milly; I only want to be sure of you. Only give me a little hope—just one word—say, 'Norman, work hard for my sake,' and I will be content."

Poor Norman! no doubt he would have been content; but that was just what Millicent could not say: so, remembering all the little lectures she had received about not keeping any one in suspense—of the great compliment a man paid a woman in giving her the option of being a slave to his whims and fancies for life—Millicent put on a pretty sober-looking air, and, stopping her cousin, who seemed as if he meant to enforce his petition by going distractedly down on his knees, and thereby endangering the flowers on good Mrs. Morley's drawing-room carpet, she said, gravely enough:—

"Dear Norman, it cannot be—I can never be your wife." Then, seeing he was about to

begin a fresh string of supplications, she added decisively, and with no little maidenly dignity, blushing scarlet as she did so—"I cannot be yours, because—because—I have promised to be another's."

"Oh, Millicent!" exclaimed Norman, in an accent as if his very heart was collapsed with pain. "Oh! do you love another?"

The deep flush still suffused Millicent's delicate face, and she looked down more than ever at her ring, but she made no answer.

"And who is it, Millicent, that has robbed me of my heart's treasure? You will not refuse, surely, to tell me who is my rival?"

"I don't know why you should call him your rival," answered Millicent, quickly, not over-pleased at the way in which Mr. Norman Austin seemed to appropriate her to himself. "I am sure I have never given you any encouragement, at least—(correcting herself as the recollection of loving romps and boyish kisses under the mistletoe, and certain flaring valentines received annually every fourteenth of February, flitted across her brain), at least, none that were intended to raise such hopes and feelings as you have just expressed; but I have no objection to tell you his name:—it is Mr. Neville."

"I guessed it was he," returned Norman, moodily; "I was sure the first night I saw that man that he would bring sorrow and misery into this house."

"I don't see why you should speak so unhandsomely of Mr. Neville," retorted Millicent, her soft hazel eyes flashing at this unmerited attack upon her lover. "I am sure he has never done anything to injure you."

"Has he not," returned the broken-hearted young man, with a gesture of vehement grief —"has he not robbed me of a treasure — my heart's idol? You would have been mine, Millicent — ay, mine, had you never seen him."

"Indeed I should not," returned Millicent, all her womanly pride boiling over at the way in which her cousin monopolised her, *nolens volens*. "Indeed, Norman, you are quite mistaken; I could never, never have been your wife."

Norman did not answer for a minute or so; he sat with his face buried in his hands, heedless of the summer's sun that shone in its fullest glory, even though it was over Guildford Street, Russell Square, and dead to the

sweet fragrance of the exquisite flowers with which Millicent's graceful taste had filled the windows. Suddenly he rose up, and, taking her hand firmly within his own, said, in a hoarse, hollow tone:—

"I will not deny, Millicent, that this has been a great blow to me. I own it was presumptuous; but I always have looked upon you as the being who was to be my wife, the dear, sweet partner of my days. And I have loved you so truly, Millicent, I would so have striven for you—worked for you—lived for you—died for you," continued he, with increasing energy, if needs must. "And then, to be forced to renounce all hope! And even that I could bear. But, oh, Millicent, to give you up to such a man as Eustace Neville!"

As Norman's first despairing words fell upon Millicent's ears, her young, kind heart ached at inflicting such pain, and she quite lamented that her sisters Cherry or Blanche were not old enough to be offered to Norman to soothe his affliction; or that she could not be cut into two, or have a counterpart, like the celebrities at Madame Tussaud's; but, ere he had finished his speech, her softer feelings

were swallowed up in her vehement indignation at hearing her lover spoken of so disparagingly; her eyes flashed still brighter than before; and she half rose, as she said:—

"'Such a man as Eustace Neville!' What do you mean by speaking thus of one so everyway your superior?"

"So everyway my superior in your eyes," retorted Norman, too thankful to give vent to his vengeful feelings to be very particular, or very just in his remarks; "but not the superior of any honest man. I am not going to say any more," he continued, seeing Millicent look towards the door with haughty impatience. "Nothing that I can say, I sorrowfully know, will weigh against one word of his, and I don't mean to make the attempt. But you will think of me, Millicent, you will think of my words, when too late. I know you will marry him, for I know the deep, fervent feelings of your heart; and I know also the hold your matchless beauty has taken upon his selfish fancy—his heart, as he calls it. You will have him—you would have him, if an angel from heaven were to descend and warn you; therefore there is little chance that the words of a discarded lover will have any

weight. But, Millicent, though we part, I shall still love you; still be ready, in the hour of need, to fly to your side. Do not answer me—do not speak. Let not your last words be those of anger. Only remember, should the day come when you need help, I am ready." He took the little hand that played nervously with the ring on her finger, pressed it firmly to his lips, said, "God bless you, Milly!" and precipitately quitted the room.

Millicent felt as if she were in a disagreeable dream, from which she could not fully awaken, and she rubbed her eyes, as if in hopes to clear her mental vision. She had had a succession of surprises—some sweet, some bitter. The day had begun well, for it had brought Eustace Neville to her feet with his fervid accents, and whispered words of deep and passionate love; such love as woman's heart so yearns and longs for, so tenderly, so fondly reciprocates. Then, ere he had more than torn himself away, came Norman, with his open, honest, truthful self, to cast himself at her feet; and she was so sorry for him, so melted with pity for his disappointment: but then it was very mean, very unworthy of him, to try and poison her mind

against her accepted lover. So unlike Norman, too! she could not have believed him capable of such a base deed. She quite blushed for him—she did, and could only set it down to its true motives—envy and jealousy.

Well might he be envious! Such a man as Eustace Neville could not fail of exciting envy in the breasts of his fellow-bipeds; and when she contrasted their appearance, she ceased to wonder at Norman's undisguised envy, for a vision of Eustace Neville rose at her bidding, and she inwardly compared his tall, slight, elegantly formed figure, with Norman's heavy, thickset, broad-shouldered person; his dark, languid, soul-entrancing eyes, with Norman's clear blue, but somewhat heavy orbs; his raven hair, with Norman's almost carroty locks; his perfect ease of manner, with Norman's shy, reserved, abrupt address; and she saw plainly that Norman must feel his inferiority so very deeply, that no wonder he was savagely mortified when such a piece of perfection as Eustace crossed his path, and therefore all his ill-natured remarks were to be attributed to the disappointment of the moment. With this charitable feeling she dismissed her cousin from her mind, and

went leisurely up to her room, to meditate at her ease upon the life of happiness in store for her, and to choose out the prettiest dress she was worth wherein to dazzle the eyes of her lover when he came in the evening. Now as it wants just two hours to dinner, I will sit down in the seat Millicent has vacated, and tell you a little of the antecedents of the happy couple you will shortly be called upon to congratulate, when Dr. Dale bestows his blessing upon them at St. Pancras Church.

Millicent Morley was the eldest of eight children—five girls and three boys; Mr. Morley realising the language of Scripture, by having "a quiver full of arrows," and being excessively proud of his numerous "olive branches." He was in excellent circumstances, being an East-Indian merchant in India's palmy days, before rebellious natives had the bad taste to find out that they had any right to the land that gave them birth, or, in fact, any other vocation than to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" to their conquerors. He possessed a counting-house and private study in the best part of Leadenhall Street, wherein sat perched a confidential clerk and several subordinates. He also had a free-

hold right and interest in the very comfortable and well-furnished residence in which I am sitting, in Guildford Street, Russell Square. He had a tolerably good stock of irreproachable railway bonds and debentures, plenty of ready money in joint-stock banks, warranted not to break, and, "take him for all in all," was about as enviable a personage as you might find still flourishing in the wilds of Bloomsbury.

Mrs. Morley, dear, good, excellent woman! was also a very estimable person in her way. She was not very polished (there was a little mystery hanging over her early days); some uncomfortable rumours of her having, in the season of her youth and loveliness, lived on the basement-floor of a house in Francis Street, Tottenham Court Road, and of having occupied her fair, fat fingers, in assisting her father in the tailoring line. (Mark you, it is only a rumour; and may be but an ill-natured invention; as I, their most intimate acquaintance, should not like to vouch for the truth of the statement, simply telling the story as it was told to me.) Rumour also went on to report that Mr. Morley, being then rather a fast young gentleman, lodged in the first-floor

of that said house in Francis Street; and whether the tailor's fair daughter was called upon in some hour of need to sew a button on his waistcoat, and sewed it so near the region of his heart that he took the fair sempstress for better for worse, I really cannot tell; but certainly the high indignation of all his family when he married her, and transferred her from the limited regions of Francis Street to the wider range of Guildford Street, was manifested in a most uncommon degree, and for the first ten years they ignored the existence of a Mrs. Josiah Morley. Eventually they grew more pacific; and Mrs. Morley, after a little friendly instruction from her indulgent husband, as to the better regulation of her *h*'s and *w*'s, and after reading and digesting no end of fashionable novels, procured from a famous circulating library in the neighbourhood, began to look "a little more like other people, and thus to enable one," as Mrs. Austin—Norman's mother, and Mr. Morley's widowed sister—grandly observed, "to take a little notice of Josiah's wife;" which notice consisted in being the Morley's visitor every summer, when they went to the seaside, and establishing a comfortable home for her son during the time he

was eating his terms in Lincoln's Inn: for Mrs. Austin was the widow of a clergyman without any fortune, and she had barely enough to enable her to grace an exceedingly select and *recherché* ladies' private boarding-house at the west end of the town, where the introduction of Mr. Norman, even could his mamma have afforded it, would have been looked upon with as much horror, as if Cardinal Wiseman had wished to find him board and lodging in York Convent.

As Mrs. Morley, though an uneducated woman, was not without natural abilities, it was astonishing in how short a space of time she was enabled to perform her duties in the path of life in which it had pleased God to place her. By dint of keeping tolerably quiet, and by employing a very excellent milliner and dressmaker, few would have guessed, judging from her very personable appearance, what was the employment said to have been connected with the days of her youth.

Mrs. Morley had a great passion for fine names; and having, in obedience to her husband's commands—commands which I must do her the justice to say she never dreamt of disputing—named Millicent after his mother,

he having no further interest in naming the rest of his daughters, she indulged her romantic fancy to its fullest extent; and the consequence was, that in due time a Geraldine, Blanche, Louisa, and Edith, graced the nursery in Guildford Street with their presence. I regret to say, she was not allowed to display equal taste in naming her sons: Mr. Morley choosing that the first should be called Josiah, after himself; the second, Tom, after his father; and the third, Daniel, after a rich uncle, from whom he had expectations.

This was rather a damper to Mrs. Morley, as she had exalted notions on the subject of names: but she was a wise woman, and made the best of what could not be helped; and as the boys were sent to school, and the eldest, on leaving King's College, went straight into his father's office, she was thus spared the threefold vulgarity of hearing her boys called Josh, Tom, and Dan, to her very face.

Her daughters did not leave the paternal roof, but were educated at home; and it was to that circumstance, under Providence, that Millicent owed the excellent education she received. Some few years back, Mr. Morley had taken the daughter of a deceased friend,

who had died in distressed circumstances, into his house as a governess; and Miss Andrews having had a first-rate education, and moreover being past the blush of girlhood, was but too thankful, in return for the unaffected kindness she met with, to do her best towards training the youthful family of her benefactor in the way that they should go, so that they might find comfort on earth and a reward in heaven.

Miss Andrews was truly fond of Millicent, and not only did she impart to her the graces of a finished and polished education, but the more enduring and lasting gifts of self-respect and self-management; but as in the course of this narrative the various traits of her character will be brought to speak for themselves, I shall forbear dilating on them any further at present. Enough for me to say, that Millicent had been what is termed "out" about a year, and it was at a Christmas ball, at a neighbouring judge's, that she had met Mr. Eustace Neville, and subjugated, according to Norman's version, a very changeable and wandering heart.

But who is Mr. Eustace Neville? A little patience, reader, and I will tell you. He was

an orphan—been so for an unheard-of-number of years, as he was now two-and-thirty. His father had been a West-Indian planter, who, having amassed a large fortune, sold his estates, and with Eustace, then quite a boy, came to England to enjoy the remainder of his days.

But, alas! those days were few. He died suddenly, and the young Eustace was consigned to the care of a guardian, who sent him first to a private school, then to a public one, and from thence to college; finally, after making the "grand tour," he started him upon the world, with from about eight to ten thousand a-year, bidding him marry as soon as possible, as the best way of keeping out of mischief.

Eustace being a polite young man, thanked his guardian for his kind advice, but did not seem to have profited much by it, seeing that he was past thirty and still unmarried. However, better late than never, and Mr. Eustace Neville is fast and furious in his eagerness to make up for lost time.

There was one thing in which he fulfilled the best wishes of his best friends—he was a popular favourite. No man was more de-

cidedly the idol of his circle than Eustace Neville; whether he deserved to be so or not, it will be the aim of this story to unfold.

He had met Millicent at the ball just mentioned; and struck with her extreme beauty, and still more with the air of refinement which characterised her every movement, he, with all the impetuosity of his Creole blood, determined to lay himself out to win her affections; and that he succeeded, the result of her conference with poor Norman has fully proved.

I have now given you just as much insight into the family history of my heroine and her intended as I deem necessary for the clear understanding of the story; and as I hear Mrs. Morley's step upon the stairs, and the click of Mr. Morley's latch-key in the street-door, and know that they are the signals for the junior branches to rush into the drawing-room and see their parents before dinner, I think I shall conclude this chapter, especially as the evening will have to be devoted to the delightful task of revealing the betrothal of the eldest daughter of the house to the man of her heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIGHT MAN.

MILLICENT did not put on her prettiest dress for nothing, neither did Eustace disappoint the expectations of his betrothed. He came precisely at the hour mentioned; and after being duly closeted with papa in his study, Mrs. Morley was invited to join in the conference; and it ended by her parents sending for the blushing Millicent, and her father, with much solemnity (for Mr. Morley was a good man, and dearly loved his first-born, dutiful, and affectionate child), bestowed her upon the lover of her choice.

"And you will guard her tenderly, Mr. Neville," said he, hoarsely, as he laid her trembling hand in that of her lover's; "for she is but a mere child, and has never yet been an hour absent from her mother's side."

At this grave mention of herself, Mrs. Morley thought it proper that a few tears should moisten her cheeks; but, dear, honest woman, she was so unfeignedly charmed at the brilliant prospects in store for her beautiful Milly, that she could not for the life of her see why there should be any cause for weeping.

"I will guard her as the treasure of my soul," exclaimed Eustace, his fine features beaming with animation, while his dark eyes flashed with ill-suppressed love and passion. "I will guard her, and cherish her, and love her, and make her happiness the sole study of my life."

And at that moment Eustace Neville meant what he said; ay, honestly, truthfully, meant to fulfil all that he said, for he was by nature and temperament a warm, wild, impassioned being; and at that especial instant earth contained but one object he cared to possess, and that object was Millicent Morley. Whether he fulfilled his promise will be seen hereafter.

But just at that interesting minute the future had very little to do with the mental reflections of any one of the party. Millicent

was in such a tumult of bashful love and delight that she could think of nothing save her present entrancing happiness. With her lover's expressive eyes fixed upon her, full of melting tenderness, she forgot everything but intense gratitude to God for having thus far so evidently favoured her way in life; and mingled with her feeling of reverent devotion was an intense one of relief, at remembering she should not see any one of the family save Miss Andrews till the morning: for the young fry were all safely gone to roost, Mr. Neville not having arrived till past their usual bedtime.

Perhaps, not being quite a young man, and tolerably well versed in affairs of this sort, he had prudently deferred his visit till the domestic flock were safe out of the way; thinking, sagely, that before he saw them again the flutter and surprise of having him for a brother-in-law would be all over, and they would be duly and properly lectured by Miss Andrews and their mamma into behaving with becoming propriety.

Therefore, nothing could have shone more serenely than things did on their return to the drawing-room. Miss Andrews, if she felt any surprise, manifested none outwardly, and

made the tea as calmly as if it were an every-day custom for Mr. Neville to be bottled up for a couple of hours in Mr. Morley's study.

It is just possible that she glanced at Millicent's glowing face, and in her blushing, ingenuous countenance, read the whole truth. I more than suspect she did: and if so, it was no surprise when, at night, as she was preparing for bed, a gentle tap came to her door, and a soft voice begging for admittance, which was immediately granted, when a pair of fair arms were thrown round her neck, and the important secret faltered forth upon her kind and indulgent breast.

"And, dear Harry," (Harry was a pet name for Miss Andrews,) continued Millicent, after she had declared, at least twenty times, that she was not good enough for him, that she did not deserve such happiness, "Are you not glad? I know you are; you are such a good, such a dear soul!" And Millicent gave her an affectionate hug.

"Yes! I am glad," returned Miss Andrews, pressing the agitated girl to her bosom with all the warmth and affection of an elder sister. "Glad, dearest Milly, for your own sake, and that of your dear parents. But

Milly, you must not be angry or offended at what I am going to say: but I did hope, nay, once thought it certainly would be — and don't frown or be very outrageous if I own I should have been better pleased to have seen you the affianced wife of your cousin Norman."

"Oh, Miss Andrews!" cried Millicent, in a reproachful accent, while her cheeks flushed scarlet, as her recent interview with Norman rushed back upon her heart. "Oh, Harry, dear! you don't compare Norman with Mr. Neville!"

"In point of fortune, most certainly not," answered Miss Andrews, calmly. "But I am not in love, you know, and have watched Mr. Neville very closely; for this is no surprise to me, Milly, whatever it may be to you. I have seen his passionate admiration for some time, and I have also seen some few little points about him which I don't quite like. He may be very good (God forbid that I should think otherwise of him); but, Millicent, you will have a hard struggle, spite of the splendid destiny that seems in store for you, for he has a wayward heart and a wandering fancy, or my name is not Mary An-

drews. Now Norman, though not to be compared with Mr. Neville in point of wealth or personal advantages, is greatly his superior in intrinsic worth. What a heart, what a mind he is possessed of!"

"Not better than Eustace's," pouted Milly, not over-pleased at hearing her beloved so underrated. "You are prejudiced, Harry; you are, indeed: you always were so fond of Norman."

"Well, my dear, perhaps you are right," returned her good-natured governess, for she saw Millicent's eyes were full of tears. "You know I am growing old, and it is natural I should have a little liking for poor Norman, seeing I have known him ever since he was a boy: but that is no reason you should like him well enough for a husband; and certainly, as far as this world's goods go, you have made a very excellent choice; and as you are so fond of Mr. Neville, no doubt you will convert him into an excellent husband, for no one can be with you, Milly, and not love you."

This speech mollified Millicent, and she sat and talked over her future prospects till long after midnight; and before she left, Miss

Andrews learnt all about poor Norman's offer and Millicent's sorrow and subsequent anger.

"For you know it was very mean of Norman, because I would not have him, to abuse Mr. Neville, whom he knows so little of; and so I told him."

"Poor Norman!" sighed Miss Andrews. "You must make allowances for him, Millicent: to such a strong, loving, fervent heart as his, I can well fancy the crushing of his hopes almost drove him wild."

"Yes, but that need not have made him unjust," persisted Millicent, unable yet to forgive the slight offered to her adored Eustace.

"Ah, my dear! persons think and say such different things when they are unhappy to what they would when, like you, their cup of happiness is full to overflowing. You can afford to be merciful, Millicent, and should forgive poor Norman any bitterness he may have shown."

"Oh, I do forgive him!" cried Millicent, hastily, for memory carried her back into the past, and conjured up an unbroken vista of acts of love and kindness received at Norman's hands.

"I knew you would, my dear child," said Miss Andrews, kissing her tenderly. "And now, my love, you really must go to bed, or else in the morning I shall have you with heavy eyes and sleepless looks, and then what will Mr. Neville say to me?"

"What, indeed!" Millicent's lovely face brightened all over at hearing his very name, and kissing her old governess affectionately, she slipped back into her room, and in a few minutes was fast asleep.

Not so Miss Andrews; she went to bed it is true, but not to sleep. The announcement of Millicent's intended marriage to Mr. Neville had saddened her, she could not tell why. What objection, she asked herself a thousand times, could she have to Mr. Neville? He was rich, he was well-born, his own master, well-informed, refined, handsome, intelligent, good-natured, merry as a cricket, lively as a lark. The children doted upon him; the servants, she could see, loved to wait upon him, for he was as generous as a prince; and, added to this bright and endearing catalogue of virtues, he worshipped and adored her beloved Millicent. Then, why did she feel such mistrust of him? why would

she rather see Millicent the wife of Norman Austin, even if she were forced to earn her daily bread, in preference to seeing her married to the accomplished, the rich, the elegant Mr. Neville?—Why? Because she felt certain in her heart of hearts that Eustace Neville, with all his brilliant qualities, was totally deficient in truth and principle.

But she knew it was of very little consequence what her thoughts were, and therefore, like a prudent woman, determined to say no more in Mr. Neville's disfavour, but to hope and believe that, when linked to such a thoroughly good-principled girl as Millicent really was, all that was gross and dark in his nature would disappear under the purifying influence of her sweet and gentle presence; and with this consoling reflection she followed the example of her beautiful pupil, and fell fast asleep.

And what did poor Norman do with himself that eventful night? Did he seek his pillow, and vainly woo the coy goddess? No. He went home to his solitary chambers, but not to sleep. Sleep was a thing so impossible to be obtained, that he felt it useless to waste time in the pursuit; therefore, by way of

steadying his nerves, and driving away thought, he sat down and began manfully to unravel the mysteries of a most intricate suit.

For Norman Austin, though young, was not unknown to fame, and was regarded by the senior lights of Lincoln's Inn as a man not unlikely, at some period of his life, to grace the woolsack. He had already displayed marvellous depth of character, profound reflection, and an indomitable will. He had read much, reflected more, and woe to the luckless opponent upon whom Norman Austin brought the deep researches of his profound talent to bear!

He was not a very brilliant speaker, but better—he was an earnest one; and though not richly endowed with many personal graces, had the rare gift of a powerful, impressive voice. This, added to his towering form, gave him unheard-of advantages over his compeers. When he rose in court, and his clear, steadfast glance took in every soul around him, men listened, and instinctively felt that a master-mind was about to unfold itself; and they were never deceived in their calculations. He usually succeeded; for while the graceful oratory of his opponent, like a

winding stream, flowed smoothly along, his, like a mountain torrent, dashed impetuously down, and removed every obstacle that stood in its way.

Therefore, even in a worldly point of view, his offer to Millicent was not to be despised. Though he did not count his income by thousands, he derived enough from his labours to have secured her every comfort. He had long anticipated and gratified every wish of his mother's heart, and if that aristocratic lady could but have guessed that a daughter of the parvenue Mrs. Morley had had the bad taste to refuse her justly adored son, her indignation would have known no bounds.

But, luckily for the peace of both families, and especially for the peace of poor Norman's sensitive feelings, she had not the least suspicion of his attachment to Millicent. She valued Norman so highly, and thought so meanly of her brother's wife and family, that it never entered her mind to imagine for a moment that Norman could even bestow a thought upon so insignificant an individual as a daughter of the despised Mrs. Josiah Morley.

Norman pretty well guessed the state of his mother's mind, and thanked Heaven that

it was so; he felt that he should inevitably quarrel with any one who spoke a disparaging word against Millicent, and he knew what Mrs. Austin's remarks would be did she know that her clever, her good, her well-born, highly-educated Norman, had been refused by the grand-daughter of a Francis-Street tailor.

"But, thank God," said Norman to himself, as with a stern effort he crushed his bitter disappointment down into the deepest cell of his heart, and there locked it in, "thank God, none know, nor even guess, how deeply, how passionately, how devotedly I loved her! Ay! still love her, and ever shall continue to love her!" He rested his head upon his hand, and overcome with the agony of his feelings, sobbed aloud. This burst of natural feeling relieved him; he raised his head, shook back his thick clusters of guinea-coloured hair from off his massive brow, and muttered angrily: "Fool that I am to give way thus! I am not the only one that has met with a disappointment on the threshold of life. I must bear it as a man, and I will bear it!" cried he, rising from his chair, and pacing up and down the room. "Henceforth she shall be to me only as a

dream of the past: but I will watch over her, guard her; for I suspect that fellow Neville, spite of his handsome face and winning tongue, will use her ill. Idiot that I was, though, to say a word against him! I might be sure she would only despise me for my pains. But, never mind, I will yet win her respect, as I cannot obtain her love." And as if this thought soothed and calmed him, he sat down and quietly pursued his writing.

That he was perfectly right in supposing that his love for Millicent remained a profound secret between himself and her was proved the very next morning, when at breakfast a note was put into Mrs. Morley's hand.

"Poor, dear Norman!" cried she, after hastily looking it over, "he writes to say that he shan't be able to dine here to-night, as he has got a very difficult case coming on, and to-morrow goes on his Western circuit. Isn't that very early?" pursued she, most unsuspiciously. "I thought the summer assizes didn't begin till Midsummer."

"No more they do," observed Mr. Morley, quietly; "but Norman is a long-headed fellow: he may have other fish to fry. Who

knows," proceeded he, glancing slily at Millicent, "but what we may be going to have another wedding in the family?"

Millicent blushed painfully, but none, save Miss Andrews, attributed her blushes and confused looks to anything save maidenly modesty at her father's jocose allusions. But though confused, she felt relieved, and blest Norman in her heart for thus sparing her the pain of his presence.

Mrs. Morley laughed at her husband's speech; and Miss Cherry, who by this time had learnt the secret of her sister being engaged to marry the rich, handsome, delightful Mr. Neville, with his beautiful moustache and unexceptionable whiskers, cried out with some *naïveté*:—

"Oh! I dare say Norman is hurrying away that he may be back all the sooner. It would be a dreadful thing if he weren't here for the wedding."

"Hold your tongue, Cherry!" said her father, seeing Millicent's cheeks crimson painfully. "What a chatterbox you are! I am sure you will never be married, Miss, if you talk on at that rate."

"What rate, papa?" cried poor Cherry,

looking quite aghast at his fearful prediction. But Miss Andrews, pitying Millicent's confusion, interposed, and telling her pupils it was time they repaired to the schoolroom, gathered her flock around her and quitted the room.

In the schoolroom, however, spite of Miss Andrews's grave silence, the conversation was resumed, and no efforts on her part could stop it. The two elder girls would lay their heads together and keep up a perpetual murmur of "Who would have thought of Millicent's going to be married!" And Cherry, who was fifteen, began to think that perhaps her time was not far off.

In vain the governess commanded silence, and threatened severe tasks if she were disobeyed. It was no use, sober business was out of the question for that day; so at last she gave it up in despair, and desiring that all the books should be put away, proclaimed a holiday, thinking wisely that the sooner the matter was talked out the sooner its interest would die away.

Her commands were obeyed with alacrity; and then the girls clustered round the table, and began to discuss the merits of their brother-

in-law, that was to be, as fast as their tongues would let them.

"I do like him so," cried Blanche, gleefully: "he is so handsome, so good-natured, and dances so beautifully."

"And I like him, too," chimed in the little Louisa (Edith was still in the nursery), "for he bought me my beautiful doll."

"And we are to be Milly's bridemaids," resumed Blanche, not deigning, in the majesty of her thirteen years, to take any notice of the childish piping of the little seven-year-old Louisa.

"Of course," said Cherry, decisively. "And I shall then be Miss Morley—shan't I, Harry?"

"Yes," answered Miss Andrews, quietly; "and as you seem to attach so much consequence to the title, it would be as well if you remembered that others may like to be called 'Miss' as well as yourself."

Cherry coloured a little at this gentle rebuke; but she dearly loved Miss Andrews, and jumping up kissed her, saying,—

"Oh, dearest Miss Andrews, I only call you Harry out of love. I don't mean to be rude; you know I don't."

"I know you do not," returned her go-

verness; "and I call you Cherry, from the same motive: but certainly, to the world, you will be Miss Morley."

"And when Cherry marries, then I shall be Miss Morley," cried Blanche.

"And when you get a husband, I shall be Miss Morley," lisped the little Louisa.

Miss Andrews laughed.

"And when you are all married, what's to be done? Then there will be no Miss Morley."

The girls had not provided for this emergency, and looked a little blank; but Blanche, no whit dismayed, went on:—

"I suppose we shall wear white, and have bouquets to carry. Only think how charming it will be! And Mr. Neville has such a handsome house, and keeps such a beautiful carriage."

"I dare say," said Cherry, thoughtfully, "that Millicent will sit in state—don't you call it so?"—(appealing to Miss Andrews)—"after she is married; and then I shall ask her to let me sit with her. I know when Agnes Lawford married Mr. Walpole, her sister Matilda was dressed in her bridemaid's dress, and sat in the drawing-room, and helped her

to receive all her company, and had wine and wedding-cake."

"I shall ask Milly to let me come, too," put in Miss Louisa, pricking up her ears at the mention of wine and wedding-cake. "I shall be her bridemaid as well as you."

"You are too young," said Cherry, "and so is Blanche; mamma wouldn't like you to go out by yourselves. Would she, Miss Andrews?"

"Most probably not, my dears," returned that sage lady. "But now I want to give you all a little advice. I have let you have a holiday to-day, and you may say and do anything you please up here, because up here nobody will hear you. But below-stairs, in the drawing-room, you must be very careful not to speak about Millicent's being married. You will distress her very much if you do, and annoy Mr. Neville; and I am sure you do not wish to offend him."

"Oh, dear, no!" cried both the elder girls in a breath; and Louisa, thinking the wedding-cake might disappear amid the haze of Mr. Neville's displeasure, promised unqualified obedience to her governess's wishes.

"What a pity Norman is obliged to go into the country!" said Cherry; "it is very

provoking that he must go and defend prisoners, just when we want him here to talk to about Millicent. There would be no harm in our speaking to him, would there, Miss Andrews? because he is just like a brother."

Poor Norman! Miss Andrews much doubted if he would be very grateful for the confidence they so generously wished to repose in him; but as she felt sure he would take uncommon good care to keep out of their way, she contented herself by simply replying:

"I am afraid Norman thinks more of trials and juries than bridemaids and weddings; but no doubt he will be glad to hear of Millicent's happiness, and he may be back in time to see her married."

"When is that to be?" cried Blanche. "Do tell us, dear Harry. I am sure you know."

"Indeed, I do not know," returned Miss Andrews; "but never fear, Blanche, you will learn all in good time."

"Yes! but I want to know directly," cried Cherry, impatiently. "I dragged Millicent up in a corner, and just whispered it in her ear; but she shook her head and looked as grave as an old judge, and told me not to

speak of such a thing again. Then I caught hold of Jos before he went to the office; but he laughed, and said a child like me had no business to ask such questions. Child, indeed! I am only fifteen months younger than he, I can tell him!"

"I think it will be soon," said Blanche; "for I heard mamma tell papa that, of course, Tom and Dan must come home for the wedding."

"May we call Mr. Neville, Eustace?" asked Geraldine, inquiringly. "I suppose, as he is to be our brother, we may. I heard Millicent call him Eustace, when speaking of him at breakfast-time."

"Most decidedly not!" returned Miss Andrews, gravely. "You are not to call him anything but Mr. Neville, unless he give you his special permission so to do."

Here further comments were stopped by the entrance of Mrs. Morley and Millicent; and as they immediately went for their usual walk, the conversation was dropped.

The girls were as good as their word. Not a syllable did they drop relative to the great event when in company, but scrupulously kept out of Millicent's and Mr. Neville's

way; and he rewarded them for their forbearance, by lavishing on them the handsomest presents Millicent could select or he pay for.

This did not fail to increase his popularity; and by the time the wedding-day arrived there was but one opinion, from Mr. Morley down to old Hannah, who had nursed Millicent and all the children in succession, that Mr. Eustace Neville was the handsomest and most generous of men, and that Millicent and he were born for each other.

All but Miss Andrews, she did not forget the absent Norman; and, spite of Mr. Neville's unvarying courtesy to herself, his presents to the children, his magnificent *cadeaux* to the bride elect, his handsome offerings to his new parents, she would have given much had Mr. Neville never shed the lustre of his presence on Bloomsbury, and that Millicent had been going to marry her unendowed cousin, upon five hundred a-year and a cottage in Camden Town.

But it was too late now; for the *trousseau* was being ordered, servants hired, carriages chosen, horses looked at, and all sorts of pleasant business from morning till night. Guild-

ford Street was quite on the tip-toe of expectation. Never had it enjoyed such a treat before; I much doubt if it has since. One morning would come Mr. Neville in a suit of grey, looking the most refined of convicts, attended by masters of livery-stables, grooms, ostlers, &c. leading horses, for Millicent to choose one for riding—warranted, of course, to possess all the cardinal virtues. Then the window-blinds of neighbouring houses would be hastily raised, and fair young faces peeped out to look at Miss Morley's lover; while from the upper regions maids appeared in bodily form, and watched the interesting proceedings. Another day a drag appeared, driving up and down to display the paces and docility of the various carriage-horses, also warranted to go like lambs in harness; and the windows were again lined with spectators, while Eustace would stand upon the steps smoking a cigar, and giving his orders with that unmistakable air of polish and decision which none but a west-end *habitué* can attain to; and Mr. Morley would look on with a pleasant sensation of gratified pride, and feel, spite of himself, an inch taller,

at the idea of having such an aristocratic son-in-law.

And the days that wait for no one, that pursue their steady course, indifferent whether they send an Orsini to the scaffold or a bride to the altar, went on their own steady pace, and in due time ushered in the wedding morn of Millicent Morley. Great had been the preparation—great were the results; for I can assure my readers that things are managed quite as well in the unknown regions of Bloomsbury as in aristocratic Belgravia: just as many bridemaids attended Millicent as ever clustered round my "Lady Mary" or "Lady Jane." She had just as lovely a dress, looked quite as graceful and refined, as if she had never been beyond the precincts of St. James's. The company also were well chosen, being culled from the best of the Morley visiting-list, and embellished by some stylish friends of the bridegroom; for as Mrs. Sutton, the wife of Eustace's guardian, pathetically observed, "Poor Eustace was going to marry a girl quite out of their set, therefore it would only be charitable, out of compliment to him, to go to the breakfast;" and

as Eustace's other friends were equally magnanimous, his wedding did not lack fashionable visitors, — a circumstance Mrs. Morley seemed fully grateful for, if we may judge by the number of times she thanked her exalted guests for the honour of their presence. But on the whole it passed off with *éclat*, there being abundance of good speeches made, Eustace returning a singularly graceful and elegant answer for himself and bride; so much so, that Millicent's eyes glistened with pride for this her husband of an hour. The girls, too, made very pretty bridemaids, and carried the finest bouquets London could produce; and at last, when the parting hour came, and Millicent, all radiant in her loveliness, was handed in by the adoring Eustace, who that saw that young girl depart so full of love, hope, and joy, could have foreseen the dark perils that lay in wait for her?

Certainly not one of the gay party invited to do her honour. Even Miss Andrews, much as she espoused Norman's cause, could not but own that Millicent had made a brilliant settlement. As to Norman, he was completely lost sight of in the general delight. Mrs. Austin, who of course graced the breakfast

with her presence, only regretted his absence on account of the extra importance it would have given her. He had already written to his uncle and aunt, and offered his congratulations; and Millicent had received a superb bracelet, with just the words, "From Norman Austin to Millicent Morley." And she pitied him much, and felt so grateful for her gift, that she told Miss Andrews she should always prize it. But that was all. None knew—none guessed—the bitter agony, the overwhelming sorrow, his strong enduring heart was suffering; and that at the very moment of Millicent's departure, when the guests were crowding the balcony, and her young brothers, elate with the unlimited supply of champagne supplied to them, were shouting themselves hoarse, his lonely rooms in Lincoln's Inn were echoing with groans of suppressed anguish, rung from the strong man's soul by the death-like certainty that Millicent—his Millicent—was the Millicent of another. The next day's "Times" told him how that yesterday, the 18th instant, Eustace Philip Neville, Esq., only son of Philip Neville, Esq., of the Island of Barbadoes, was married to Millicent, eldest daughter of Josiah Morley, Esq., of

Guildford Street, Russell Square. Half-an-hour later wedding-cake and cards arrived, and with them a note from Miss Andrews, informing him, in his aunt's name, that Millicent and her husband had departed *viâ* Dover and Calais for Paris.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREEN-STREET MYSTERY.

I MUST now take the privilege of a tale-teller, and beg of my readers to retrace their steps with me back to the night that Eustace Neville made his formal proposal to Millicent Morley. It was, if you remember, a calm, star-light night, succeeding a day of great promise, and the mild rays of a young May moon shed a soft radiance over the garden of Sir Frederick Pollock, who, at the time I write of, resided in the mansion that skirts one end of Queen Square, and exactly facing Mr. Morley's house, his being situated in the best part of Guildford Street. It was, indeed, a glorious night; and the young moon, riding high in the heavens, dispersed the fleecy clouds on either side of her; and, quite impartial in the distribution of her favours, lit up equally with her radiance

the humbler neighbourhood of Camden Town, which every one knows forms the northern suburb to Bloomsbury.

It was past eleven o'clock, and most of the inhabitants of that unpretending spot, being principally clerks in City houses, had retired to rest, to refresh themselves by a good night's rest for the renewal of their morning's labour; and a pedestrian perambulating the evenly-built third-class sort of streets which intersect that crowded quarter, would have found it a difficult matter to pick out a house the inhabitants of which were not wrapt in profound slumber.

There were, however, a few exceptions; and among them a small house in Green Street, which, as all my readers may not be well acquainted with the locality, I may as well mention, is situated on the Regent Park side of Camden Town, and to the first floor of which we will take the liberty of mounting and entering without permission. It was a small, meanly-furnished room, communicating, as is usual in such houses, with a room still smaller at the back. It was furnished as a sitting-room, but evidently only for the occupation of persons in a middling rank of life,

and those decidedly not possessed of the best taste. A gaudily-painted drugget covered the centre of the apartment, but left exposed some discoloured looking boards. A round table, sporting an equally vulgar flaring oil-skin, representing on its surface a peacock, with a tail that would have inevitably disgusted any of that respectable and dignified tribe had they chanced to have seen it, stood in the middle of the room. The rest of the furniture was in accordance; and the whole gave you the idea, that perhaps the house was rented by a policeman and his wife, and that washing-days and children rioted in the mansion from Tuesday to Tuesday.

Nevertheless there were one or two things in the room that certainly denoted that some one of a superior class in life made it their residence for the present. A small cottage-piano, of elegant design and faultless tone (one of Collard's), stood facing the fireplace; a guitar lay at one end of a terrible, hard, prickly, horsehair couch; and on the vulgar table, just mentioned, lay a variety of costly trifles, which were most assuredly out of place in such an abode. A bright fire filled the grate, for, though May, the nights were chilly; and that

with a Palmer's lamp, spread a pleasant light over the apartment.

The room was not without its occupants. A young woman lay upon the sofa in an attitude of profound repose. She was long past the first blush of girlhood, as she was fully thirty, if not more, and had a wasted, thin, pinched look, while her features were unnaturally sharp and drawn. Still there were traces on her countenance of great and unmistakable beauty—heavy masses of hair, black as night, fell neglectedly around her wan face, and increased the deathly pallor that overspread it; while her large and lustrous eyes seemed double their size from the falling in of her cheeks. Still there were the traces of beauty—the small, classical-shaped head, the tiny ear, the straight Grecian nose; all of which told what she must have been ere sorrow had set its withering stamp upon her. But sorrow had done its worst,—had washed the light from her eyes and the bloom from her cheeks, but had not been able to efface those indelible signs which told, as plainly as if written upon her brow, that she was the descendant of slaves, a despised Quadroon.

The only other person in the room was a little girl, apparently about twelve years old. She was small for her age, and delicately made, but there was sufficient likeness between her and the sleeping woman to show that they were mother and daughter. She had the same deep full eyes, the same pure colourless complexion, the same heavy masses of raven hair, simply confined in a net, but which helped to set off a singularly small, and, like her mother's, gracefully-shaped head; but her face was plain, her features bad, and she had altogether a cold, unlovable, passionless expression, that was not pleasant to look upon.

Perhaps the utter loneliness of her life had greatly helped to produce the unchildlike contraction of her features. To the best of her knowledge, she had always lived in a sort of respectable poverty, knowing no one—no one knowing her—as her mother kept her in a profound seclusion, and, like all the Quadroon race, wreaked her vengeance on those she suspected of looking down upon her, by inspiring the young Violet with a contemptuous disdain of all around her.

And Violet, I grieve to say, had profited largely by her mother's lessons; besides which

she had proud Saxon blood in her veins; and the child, though reared in seclusion, rejected all the advances made to her by the kind-hearted landlady of the house, and looked down upon her, and her tribe of fat, rosy-cheeked, yellow-haired children, with supreme contempt.

At this moment she was busy reading, but a thoughtful observer might have seen that her mind was preoccupied, and that she listened with the profoundest attention to the slightest noise on the stairs. Suddenly the woman on the couch turned and spoke.

"Violet"—and her voice sounded peevishly weary—"Violet, what is it o'clock? I have been asleep, I think. How late your father is to-night!"

The child rose with quiet gravity, and putting aside her book went to the fireplace, and taking up a very costly little watch that reposed in an equally costly case, answered in a low, clear voice:

"Eleven o'clock, mamma. Don't you think something prevents papa coming?" and the child slightly yawned. "Perhaps he won't come to-night at all?"

"Yes, he will," said the woman, abruptly,

"because he said he would. I never knew him say a thing that he didn't do," muttered she, half to herself. "He'll come, unless he is dead!" Then, partly raising herself, she added: "Violet, I will take my mixture; I feel faint; and then, my darling, if you are tired, go to bed: you will see your papa some other day."

"Oh, no, mamma," cried the child eagerly, her plain features lighting up with irresistible fire. "Oh, no; I am not sleepy, and I do so want to see papa!" And as she spoke she poured out the medicine, and approaching the sofa handed it to her mother.

The woman took it with feverish impatience, and then pressing Violet to her bosom she murmured, "My own, my darling, my precious Violet, you shall be a lady—you shall. Your father shall do you justice; or—" and her dark eyes gleamed—"I will know the reason why. He has not been here very often lately," pursued she, in a low, dissatisfied tone. "I'll press my suit to-night—I will!" And as she said this, she sat upright in an attitude of defiance.

The child looked puzzled, but not surprised. She was evidently used to these outbursts of passion, and probably it was

from hearing herself constantly spoken of as one for whom some great destiny was in store, that she had acquired such an overweening sense of her own importance. She stood, therefore, beside her mother's couch, and listened to her raving predictions of the wonderful fortune she would one day come into, with condescending self-complacency. At last, when the woman had tired herself out, she said in an exhausted tone, "Sing to me, Violet; sing me the Evening Hymn, it will soothe and comfort me."

"Yes, mamma; but shall I not disturb the people in the house? They are all gone to bed, I think." And the young Violet looked inquiringly at her mother.

"Never mind if you do," returned the sick woman, imperiously. "What does it signify whether they are pleased or displeased?"

The child obeyed without further comment, for she, in her hardness of spirit, quite agreed with her mother that it did not signify, though her childish timidity led her to hesitate. She opened the instrument and commenced the Catholic Hymn to the Virgin.

Oh, what a volume of song gushed forth as that young child opened her lips! what

flowing melody! what richness of tones! Untaught as the voice evidently was, the perfection of her organ could not be mistaken, as the childish notes floated right up into mid air, and then died away like the cadence of an Æolian harp.

She need not have feared disturbing the inmates of the house; all loved to hear her. Even the young gentleman lodger overhead (a student at the Veterinary College), sat up in bed, and thought he must be dreaming of Paradise, till he recollected "the musical little monkey," as he termed her, in the first floor; and with that recollection came also another of a sound box on the ear, administered by that youug lady for his presumption in daring to kiss her.

"Precious spiteful little devil!" was his not over-complimentary remark, as he composed himself down to sleep again; "but if ever a devil had an angel's voice, she has."

But during the progress of the hymn a third person had been added to the scene. So wrapt was the child in the melody she was producing, that she noticed not the opening of the door; and her mother, who lay with her eyes closed, drinking in the sweet notes that

filled the room, did not see that the being upon whom her thoughts at that instant were resting, was standing just inside the doorway. Violet finished the hymn and looked up.

"Papa! dearest papa!" exclaimed she; and in a rapture of delight she sprang off the music-stool into his arms.

"Well, little one," said the gentleman, (for a gentleman any one could see he was, though, for reasons of his own, he was closely muffled up in a large cloak, and wore his hat slouched down over his eyes), "Well, little one, how are you?" and pushing the child gently before him, he walked up to the couch, saying, "I am sorry, Rose, I couldn't get here earlier, but I have been so confoundedly busy of late."

"That it seems you always are now," returned the woman, who, the moment she saw him, raised herself up from her recumbent position.

"Come now," said the man, in a haughty, offended tone of voice, "if you are going to give way to your temper, I'm off, and shan't come back again in a hurry, I can tell you."

"I didn't mean to vex you," answered the woman, in a subdued tone of voice, while large

tears filled her eyes. "But it is so lonely here, and it is full ten days since you came last."

"Not more lonely here than it would be anywhere else," retorted the man. "However, if you don't like the place, perhaps you will be glad to hear that there's a change in store for you. I am going abroad, Rose, and mean to take you with me."

"And me too, papa?" exclaimed Violet. "How delightful that will be! Will you go to Paris, papa? or shall you go to Rouen, and see Joan of Arc's statue, which my old French master used to talk about?"

"Neither," said her papa, somewhat curtly, for there was a questioning look in the woman's face, and a suppressed fire in her eyes, which he from experience knew boded a storm.

"Come, Rose, I have no time to lose; send Violet to bed: it is much too late for a child like that to be up, rousing the neighbourhood with her singing; you will have the house indited for a nuisance."

"She waited up to see you," returned the woman, moodily; "and because I am so wretched that I don't like to be left alone. I

cannot," pursued she, with sudden energy, "bear this life any longer. I must have a change; I am not going to endure this living death—it kills me."

"Send her to bed," repeated he, in an accent that allowed of no answer. The woman cowered, and the child looked frightened. The man saw the impression he had made, and was satisfied, for his voice softened as he added, "Here, little one; if I have been long coming, I have not forgotten you:" and he took a chain of massive gold, but everyday pattern, out of his pocket, and fastened it round the child's arm. "There,"—kissing her, much as he would a disagreeable animal—"there is a chain that will serve either for a necklace or a bracelet."

Violet's eyes filled with tears. She could not explain what she felt, for her young mind did not exactly comprehend the depths of its own feelings; but, young as she was, she felt the want of a father's love, and that the gift was bestowed more to get rid of her than anything else.

She said nothing, however, but kissed him passionately; for however little he reciprocated her love, she doted upon him with all the

force of her childish nature. Then taking up the light, at an impatient gesture from him, she disappeared into the next room.

"Now, Rose," said the man, after he had divested himself of his outside wraps, and sat down by the side of the couch; "now, be a good girl, and listen patiently to what I am about to propose."

"I will listen to what you have to say, presently," answered the woman, her countenance never relaxing a muscle, "but I must speak out what I have got on my mind. I shall die if I don't."

"A good job, too," muttered the man, in a tone of suppressed passion. Then he said harshly, "Speak, then; what have you got to say?"

"Ah! I know you hate me," said she, fiercely, "but I don't care now for either your hate or your love,—the time is gone by for that. I wouldn't trouble you at all, but for my child. But I will have justice done to her: so listen. When you took me you promised marriage. I have waited year after year, but you have never fulfilled your promise; and I have never troubled you, because I knew that you would hate to take me by the hand, and

produce me as your wife: but I am dying now, and cannot burden you long, only marry me, so that in after years, when I am dead and gone, my child can say her mother was her father's wife."

"What cursed stuff you talk, Rose!" cried the man, surprised out of all prudence by this sudden burst of feeling. "You know I cannot marry you. It is quite out of the question."

"It is not such cursed stuff as you choose to call it," retorted the woman, angrily. "For half a farthing I would go to you know who, and tell all."

"Do so if you dare!" cried he, boiling over with wrath; and seizing her forcibly by the wrists, "I'll teach you to threaten me!"

The woman sank back exhausted. "Let me go!" cried she, faintly, her passion subdued by her physical weakness. "Let me go! I will do whatever you like. God help me!" she murmured, "I have no strength to do otherwise. I am dying!"

Her half-murmured words seemed to touch some hidden chord in the man's heart. The expression of his face relaxed. He looked

remorsefully at her; and when he spoke, it was in a soft, tender voice.

"What's the use of trying to thwart me, Rose? You know I will have my own way. Now listen, and all will yet go well for you and your child."

"Well, then, I am listening," said the woman, sullenly.

He bit his lip, but controlled himself and went on. "You see, Rose, I have been written to, and must leave England, and intend doing so very shortly; and I propose that you go with me. A sea voyage will do you good, and quite restore your health. And then I can take an opportunity of seeing what can be done with the governor when we are out there: perhaps matters can be smoothed over."

A flash of intense joy passed over the woman's wan countenance as the man uttered these words, and for the moment that it lasted she looked positively beautiful, and her voice sounded happy and gentle as she said,—

"I shall like to go very much, and it will do Violet good; she wants a change, poor thing."

"Violet cannot go," answered the man,

decidedly. "It is impossible,—clean out of the question .... Don't interrupt me!" seeing the woman about to break out again. "Listen while I tell you my plans. I have already provided for Violet; have looked out a school for her, where she will receive an education suitable to the rank you are so anxious for her to occupy."

He said these last words in a sneering tone; but it was lost on his unhappy listener. All her senses were swallowed up in the mortal fear of parting from her child. She roused herself, and answered authoritatively,—

"I will not go without Violet. I will not part with her."

"You will part with her, though," returned he, with equal determination.

"She is my child," cried the woman, raising herself up, and glaring at him out of the depths of her dark, sunken eyes. "I am her mother, and I won't part with her."

"I am her father," retorted he, returning her looks with interest, "and you shall part with her."

"She is not born in wedlock," gasped the woman, "and therefore she belongs to me."

"Nothing belongs to you," cried the man,

scornfully. "You are a slave, and, therefore, can claim nothing."

"But this is a free country," returned the woman, proudly. "There are no slaves here."

"Be it so," said the man, every feature of his face working with suppressed passion. "You are welcome to your freedom; but say one word in opposition to my will, and I walk into the next room and carry off your child, where you shall never see her more."

"Monster!" hissed the woman between her shut teeth, "you shall not take my child! O Heavens! to think I ever loved such a wretch!"

"Wretch, or no wretch," returned he, coolly, "you are mine, and the child is mine, and must do what I bid you. Now what's the use of your making this noise, Rose? After all, what more can you want? Am I not going to do my best to please you, and provide for your child's welfare? Just now you asked me to marry you; and suppose I did, mustn't you go back to your own country with me?"

"And there I should die," sobbed the wretched woman, all passion lost and melted into the fear and agony of parting with the

only thing her heart clung to. "Oh, fool that I was to ask you to make my child legally yours! But"—and she threw herself off the sofa, and clasped his knees—"but forgive me; and if you ever loved me, separate me not from my child."

"I must!" answered he, decidedly. "Get up, Rose; it is of no use crying. You know tears only steel my heart, not soften it; therefore you had better at once make up your mind to what cannot be avoided."

"Listen," said the woman, suddenly: "will you do this? Give me my child, and leave me to myself. I swear to you that I will take the most solemn oath you may require, that I will never divulge, by word or deed, either to my child or any one else, who her father is, or what his name is. Do this, I beseech you; only leave me to live in this my adopted country, and I will never trouble you more."

This was exactly what the man wanted, and he had not counted on his victim in vain. She had not been his property for nearly fourteen years without his pretty well knowing every trait of her character; and he could hardly conceal from her, as she knelt in earnest supplication, looking into his face as if

she would fain read his very soul, the intense satisfaction her proposal gave him. But he commanded his countenance, and for a minute or so made no answer.

"You do not answer me!" cried she, in a tone of such hopeless woe that it might have melted even a demon's heart. "For mercy's sake—for Heaven's sake, as you ever hope to have mercy shown to you—grant my prayer. Leave me my child, she is all I have left to comfort me—I will never trouble you; or if you do not like my remaining in this country I will go anywhere you wish, and work for my living."

"You work for a living! Why one minute you say you are dying!" said the man, contemptuously.

"Well, I am not strong," answered the woman, meekly; "yet I think I could earn my bread so as not to be a burden to you."

"Nonsense about being a burden to me!" rejoined he, haughtily. "Of course I shall provide for you and your child. I never meant to do anything else. So get up, Rose. And now that you are come to your senses, and see things in a reasonable light, we will talk the matter over."

The woman obeyed, but her face wore an ashen, corpse-like expression, which any one less selfish and pre-occupied than her companion would have noticed and pitied. Not so with him—no word of kindness, nor even sympathy, passed his lips. If he had ever loved her, some great revulsion must have taken place in his heart, for he looked at her with ill-concealed dislike and aversion, and, apparently without heeding her excessive weakness, went on with the business in hand.

He met with no further trouble or opposition. He had hit the right chord—passively she agreed to everything he laid down. Calmly and truthfully took the solemn oaths that he required. Fear—that strong, deep passion of the human heart, more especially the female one, and more intensely felt in a mother's heart than any other—had swallowed up every other sensation. Gone was her vehement indignation; gone were her strong passions; and fled for ever, never to return, were the last lingerings of any love she once had felt for the destroyer of her innocence. A careful observer might have noted that she avoided touching him, or otherwise coming in contact; and when, after a length-

ened conference, in which he explained to her minutely what his intentions were, he resumed his wraps, and went for an instant to the bedside of his sleeping child to take a farewell look and kiss, and the sight of the helpless little creature softening his heart, he took the poor victim of his evil passions in his arms and kissed her tenderly, she gave no answering token of affection; not a thrill in her pulse beat, not a muscle of her face moved: but she kept her gaze upon her child, as if she dreaded to see him snatch her up before her very eyes, and rush out of the room with her; and it was with a sensation of real relief that she finally saw him depart, when, having closed and double-locked the door behind him, she hastily stripped off her things, and hurrying into bed, took her child in her arms and sobbed herself to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN HOME.

MILLICENT and her husband did not return till the green foliage of summer had imperceptibly faded into the hues of autumn. They had extended their wedding tour far beyond their original intention, having at first only planned to visit Paris for a month, and then return home. But Millicent had never been abroad before; and Eustace, charmed to have a companion so capable of appreciating and enjoying the various spots of ancient interest, and the works of art which they contained, and yet so fresh and youthful that everything pleased her, insensibly departed from his original plan, and went on and on till, from Paris, they got to Switzerland, and from Switzerland into Italy, and finally to Rome.

Nor was he insensible to the admiration his beautiful wife excited wherever she

appeared. It gratified his proud heart and vain spirit to see every eye turned upon her, as when, fresh as a young May morning, and happy as a summer bird, she would go down with him to the public-dinner tables, at the various hôtels they stayed at, and electrify every one present by her radiant loveliness.

Mrs. Morley had been greatly put out by this arrangement. She had reckoned upon her daughter's stay abroad not exceeding a month at furthest, and had looked forward with no little pride to seeing her settled in Upper Brook Street before the London season closed, and to sharing in the grand dinners and parties which she expected would take place on their return.

But she was doomed to disappointment. Nor was this the only source of discontent that disturbed her quiet, easy mind. She had thought, naturally enough, that as her son-in-law had no near female relations, it was but reasonable to suppose that his wife's mother would be invited to aid him in their stead. But when, on the time being really fixed for their return, she received no definite instructions from either Millicent or her husband, she thought it only proper that she should pro-

ceed to Upper Brook Street, and see that everything was in readiness for their reception.

Judge, therefore, of her dismay, when, on her arrival at the house, she found a lady, a friend of Mr. Neville's, already in possession, and giving her orders, under sanction of a letter from him, with the most imperturbable calmness.

Mrs. Morley was surprised, and not a little annoyed, as Mrs. Vere, the lady in question, received her with the same sort of composure that she would a perfect stranger, and as if she, Mrs. Vere, was a dearly-loved sister of Neville's, and arranging everything according to what she knew was her brother's taste.

Luckily there was not much, beyond seeing a finishing touch put here and there, for either lady to exercise her taste upon; for Eustace before he went abroad had superintended the new furnishing of the drawing-rooms and the suite of apartments Millicent was to occupy, and it was only the re-arranging of them that required the supervision of a female hand.

It cannot be denied that Mrs. Vere had a very correct judgment, and carried out Eustace's instructions to the very letter; and, heedless of Mrs. Morley's manifest indignation,

went on giving her orders, and seeing to their fulfilment, as if no such person as Millicent's mother had been in existence.

This was mortifying, to say the least; and though Mrs. Morley was really a most easy, good-natured soul, and, moreover, not at all prone to take offence, still she could not help feeling that a slight had been put upon her; and she began to suspect that her illustrious son-in-law was not quite so amiable and such a paragon of perfection as she had hitherto thought him.

But there was comfort in remembering that, on Millicent's return, all this would be set right, and that it was only for the present that she had to endure the mortification of seeing this Mrs. Vere order her daughter's servants about in her daughter's house.

This reflection consoled her so much, that she determined to stay, and if she could not assist in giving orders, at any rate to keep an eye on Mrs. Vere's proceedings.

"Mrs. Vere? Who was she? and what was she?"

"Who, indeed?" Mrs. Morley asked herself this question a hundred times during the course of the first day's visit; and not

content with asking herself, asked the servants also.

But the servants could not give any very satisfactory answers. The cook, an elderly person, who had lived with Mr. Neville some years, answered discreetly, that Mrs. Vere was a lady, she believed, master had known ever since he was a boy; in fact, a West Ingey by birth, the same as master; that Mr. Vere was a lawyer, and had gone abroad about a railroad that was forming somewhere out in foreign parts, and that he had asked master to be Mrs. Vere's guardian during his absence.

This was not at all a satisfactory statement, and Mrs. Morley determined to warn Millicent, and advise her to confine Eustace's guardianship to quite a legal form.

The object of all these thoughts and inquiries, however, seemed in no way disconcerted, though she shrewdly guessed that Mrs. Morley had questioned the cook, and cross-questioned the housemaid, and, in fact, examined all the servants, as to who she was, and where she came from.

"I am sure Millicent ought to be much obliged to you," said Mrs. Morley, as, the evening before the travellers were expected home, she and Mrs. Vere stood together in

the drawing-room. "I am sure"—(looking round with admiring eyes)—"you have made the rooms look very pretty."

Mrs. Morley was right; they looked more than pretty, for they looked beautiful, with their hangings of yellow damask, tables, sofas, and chairs of inlaid wood: marble consoles, bronzes, pictures, old china, and all the numerous nothings that help to adorn our modern saloons.

But Mrs. Vere did not seem either grateful or gratified by the praise bestowed on her; she laughed a little, low, peculiar laugh, but said nothing.

"I hope you will look in to-morrow evening, that Millicent may thank you. She will be very glad to see you," said Mrs. Morley, looking at her in a friendly, good-hearted manner, as much as to say, as you have had all the trouble, it is but fair you you should come in for a little praise; "for after all," thought she, good, excellent woman as she was, "I dare say Mr. Neville did not like to trouble me, and knew he could command this little person's services; for one can see at half a glance that she is not very rich, and left as she is, poor thing, it is only natural she should wish to show her gratitude."

I am afraid, if she could have read the thoughts of that "little person," as she styled Mrs. Vere, she would soon have found out her mistake. Luckily for the peace of mankind, the gift of divining what passes in another's breast is given to few. As it was, Mrs. Vere answered in a somewhat careless tone of voice:—

"Thank you, no! not to-morrow. Mrs. Neville will be tired after travelling; and I know Eustace is a bad sailor."

There was not much to cavil at in this speech; but, somehow, it jarred upon the mother's heart. "Eustace, indeed!"—she should tell Millicent to put a stop to that. She thought Mrs. Vere might do something better than call another woman's husband by his Christian name, and accordingly she answered Mrs. Vere in her most distant manner:—

"I am sorry to hear that Mr. Neville is a bad sailor"—(great emphasis on the *Mister*) —"as I am afraid my daughter is not much of one either."

To this speech Mrs. Vere did not deign to vouchsafe any answer, but an amused smile flitted across her features, and soon after, both ladies took their departure.

Mrs. Vere was as good as her word; she

did not make her appearance in Brook Street on the following day; and in the rapture of meeting with her darling Millicent, Mrs. Morley forgot all about her disagreeable sensations, and the mortifications to which she had been subjected, and Eustace was so hearty in his welcome, and said so naturally, when Millicent expressed her admiration of the rooms:—

"Ah! I wrote to Mrs. Vere, a very old friend of mine, who lives close by, just to step in and see how the servants were going on."

"I would not trouble you," pursued he, addressing Mrs. Morley, "because I knew that, with your large establishment you had enough already upon your hands."

Mrs. Morley was positively quite ashamed of herself to think that she had actually conceived evil of such an amiable, considerate being as her son-in-law. She felt conscience-stricken, and it was not until the evening, when, after dinner, Eustace suddenly recollected that he must go to the stables and see the horses, that she remembered her intentions of giving Millicent a little warning concerning Mrs. Vere. Millicent was looking lovely,—her foreign tour had not only improved her beauty, but her intercourse with the world and the

different style in which she had lived added that peculiar ease and polish that rendered her quite perfect. Her mother might well be excused for taking pride in such a faultless-looking creature, and feeling more than anxious on her account; and now was just the moment, for Cherry and Blanche had departed with Miss Andrews, and Mr. Morley was momentarily expected to welcome his daughter home, and take his wife back to Guildford Street; so Mrs. Morley cleared her throat, and began:—

"Milly, my dear, did you ever hear Mr. Neville speak of this Mrs. Vere? Who is she? or what is she?"

"I am sure, mamma, I know no more than you do," answered Millicent. "All that Eustace ever said to me was, that as you lived so far off, he would write to his friend Mrs. Vere, and ask her just to step in and give a look. I believe he is anxious I should make her acquaintance; at least, he implied as much. But I am sure, dear mamma," continued Millicent, upon whose mind a slight glimmering began to break, that perhaps her mother was offended at not being consulted, "I am sure Eustace would have written to you, but for fear of giving you trouble."

"Oh! it would have been a pleasure, not a trouble," said Mrs. Morley. "However, it is of no consequence. But, Milly, take my advice,—don't be too intimate with this Mrs. Vere: for my own part, I don't like her looks."

Millicent smiled. "Thank you, dearest mother, but I am not going to be intimate with any one; I shall have enough to do to manage my house and look after Eustace's comforts, and if I want to learn anything, of course I shall come to you, dear mamma."

Mrs. Morley looked pleased. "You always were a good girl, Milly," said she, "and I am not afraid that any one will supplant you in your husband's affections; but I must own, that I think this Mrs. Vere is very free and easy. She called Mr. Neville by his Christian name!—a liberty which even I don't take,"—and Mrs. Morley bridled up,—"and which I thought quite out of place in her."

"I suppose she has been used to do so," responded Millicent, thoughtfully. "I think Eustace mentioned that he had known her a great many years."

"Oh! so the cook told me," answered her mother; "and also that her husband is abroad."

Millicent was much annoyed that her mother should have gossiped with her husband's servants about their master; and felt certain that Eustace, should it come to his ears, would be deeply offended: but she had too much respect for her to allow a disapproving word to escape her lips.

Here, before Eustace and Mr. Morley make their appearance, I would fain offer one word of advice to the young ladies of the present day, who, like my heroine, have parents, whose early education may have been neglected, or who, like poor Mrs. Morley, have failed to graft on the rough but sterling stock those elegancies and modern conventionalities, the want of which might at times be painfully evident; that it would conduce much more to their own dignity if they paid a little more deference to the authors of their being, and instead of constantly finding fault and trying to set them right on points which, after all, are but of secondary importance, they were to set an example for others to follow, by obedience and attention, —by never appearing to notice, much less to ridicule, the want of education and refinement in their parents, and thus induce those around them to treat them with that respect

which it should in every case be their aim to render.

Millicent was a pattern on this point; carefully educated by the accomplished Miss Andrews in every qualification that could constitute a perfect lady, she could not be blind to the utter want of breeding in her mother; yet was she scrupulously careful, neither by word nor deed to show her knowledge of her parent's defects. On the contrary, she covered those defects by the halo of respect she threw around her, and not the most impertinent or satirical of persons would have had the hardihood to ridicule Mrs. Morley in her daughter's presence.

This conversation with her mother made Millicent feel a little grave, for I am sorry to be obliged to own, that at this moment, though almost the first hour of setting foot in her husband's house, dark thoughts were chasing each other through the young wife's breast. She had now been married above three months, and, much as she truly and fervently loved her husband, could not be blind to the fact, that his was a temper and disposition very difficult to manage. And also that, if she meant to make him happy or have any happiness herself, she must be careful how

she formed her circle of acquaintances in this her first onset in married life.

She had found out already that Eustace, though he passionately loved her, loved himself still more; that though brilliant, clever, and witty, he was fearfully open to flattery—and that, too, from women! that he was still more fearfully susceptible to the charm of novelty; and that a new face, though but an ordinary one, possessed a power over his wandering imagination that the most beautiful of faces, when once known, ceased to possess.

She was not, therefore, particularly pleased with her mother's revelations, though she carefully abstained from letting her kind but injudicious parent know what was passing in her mind, contenting herself by thanking her warmly for her prudential advice, and inwardly determining to be on her guard. Here the entrance of her father and husband put an end to the conversation, and the subject was not again resumed.

The next morning Eustace declared his intention of going to the City: "And very probably I shall look in upon Austin," added he; "and if he is not better engaged, bring him home to dinner."

Millicent's heart stood still, and the tell-

tale blood rushed to her cheek. Luckily her husband was engaged in gathering up his letters, and did not notice her manifest confusion; with a strong effort she mastered her emotion, and when she spoke it was with her usual composure of voice and manner.

"Do so, dear Eustace. I shall be very glad to see Norman; but I am afraid, as term-time has just begun, he will be too busy to come: he generally is so much engaged."

Perhaps it was because Millicent felt sure that Norman would not come that she spoke so composedly. Eustace, however, did not seem to be paying much attention to either her or her answers. He fidgeted about his letters, and at last said abruptly, "What are you going to do with yourself to-day?"

Millicent smiled a happy smile, as she answered gaily, "Going to do with myself! —you may well ask that question. What shall I do without you? Begin by ordering dinner, then unpack my things and get out all the presents. After luncheon, go and see mamma; and, if you have no objection, bring Cherry and Blanche home to dine with us. There, sir," added she, in the fulness of her girlish glee, "that's what your little wife is going to do to-day!"

"Oh!" said her husband hastily, purposely not seeming to notice the concluding words, "I would rather you did not. To tell the truth, Millicent, now that you are my wife, I should wish you to break off as much as possible the Guildford-Street connexion . . . Don't misunderstand me;" (seeing her raise her eyes in undisguised surprise,) "I don't, of course, mean that you are to break with your parents and family: it is very natural that you should wish to see them now and then, and you can always go at proper times, and they can come here in the same way. But when we are settled, I shall introduce you to such a very different circle, that you will see the necessity yourself of not having the house overrun at all times and seasons with a parcel of hoydenish school-girls."

See the necessity of disowning her fond mother! her good, kind father! her loving, affectionate sisters! For a second or so, Millicent could not speak, her heart literally swelling with indignation; but ere she could steady her voice sufficiently to reply, the door opened, and the servant announced "Mrs. Vere!"

Eustace started up as the little lady, all flounces and ringlets, swam into the room.

She was attired in the height of the fashion, but though in good taste, she had too much the air of a pretty *modiste* about her to be truly ladylike. As she entered, bridling and sidling, shaking her curls, and dancing her shoulders up and down, Millicent saw at a glance that her mother's remarks, though homely, were perfectly true.

"And now I must be off," cried Eustace, with unusual alacrity, after he had introduced Mrs. Vere to his wife, as one whom he valued as a sister—whom he had known all his life, and whom he trusted his dear Millicent would love and value also. "Now, I must be going —good-bye, Millicent," and he kissed her fair forehead. "I shall be back for a seven-o'clock dinner, but not before; as, after I have seen Norman, I am going to the club. Perhaps you will dine with us?" nodding to Mrs. Vere. "But I shall leave Millicent to do the honours;" and with as much rapidity now, as a minute ago he had lingered, he hastily quitted the room.

Millicent felt a strange thrill cross her heart as she stood facing her little beflounced, bewigged, and carefully dressed visitor; but seeing that it was not the height of good

manners to keep her standing, she begged of her to be seated, and drew a chair herself, by way of setting an example.

Mrs. Vere did as she was bid; and when both ladies were settled, Millicent opened the ball.

"I am delighted to have an opportunity of thanking you, Mrs. Vere," said she, composedly; "both Mr. Neville and myself must ever feel obliged for your kindness in seeing everything so nicely prepared for us. I am only afraid that it has been a sad trouble to you."

"Oh, dear, no!" returned Mrs. Vere, while an almost imperceptible sneer quivered round her pretty mouth. "Quite the contrary! I am but too glad that you like my humble arrangements; and Mr. Neville also. I am, indeed, gratified."

Had Millicent not been previously warned by her mother, she could not have failed to notice the peculiar emphasis Mrs. Vere put upon Eustace's name. But Millicent was determined not to understand anything in the way of hints or inuendos, and therefore answered calmly:—

"Yes, my husband is quite charmed and grateful, I assure you; and I hope you will

give him a better opportunity of expressing his thanks than he had just now, and accept his invitation to dine with us to-night."

"With the greatest pleasure," returned Mrs. Vere; "and so, as I always suffer from headache, perhaps you will kindly let me go up-stairs, and take off my bonnet."

Millicent stared at her in downright amazement. Did she hear aright? What! was she going to stay all day? Did Mrs. Vere's notions of an invitation for a seven-o'clock dinner comprise coming at eleven in the morning?

Millicent thought it an unheard-of piece of freedom, and one she by no means relished; and therefore answered gravely:—

"I am afraid I shall not be able to have the pleasure of your company the whole day, because I shall be very busy unpacking all the morning; and after luncheon, I promised mamma to go over to Guildford Street."

"Oh, pray don't make a stranger of me!" cried Mrs. Vere. "I hope, my dear Mrs. Neville, you won't stand upon ceremony with such an old friend of your husband's as I am. I assure you I am come on purpose to spend a long day with you. I thought you might be

glad of my assistance in helping to unpack and arrange your things; and as to going to Guildford Street, to see your dear mother, I shall be quite delighted to bear you company. She seemed such a dear, good-natured person, I quite took to her."

The contempt conveyed in Mrs. Vere's last words was not lost upon Millicent; but she controlled herself, and said nothing. In fact, had she been a wiser and older person, I don't know that she could have said much. She remained silent, inwardly meditating what step to pursue next; and if her thoughts could have found utterance, they would have shaped themselves thus:—

"My mother is right. This Mrs. Vere is likely to prove a very disagreeable, designing person. I must nip this intimacy in the bud; but that cannot be done by being rude. Of course she must stay; but I shall not go and see my dear mother just that she may make game of her, and then retail all her impertinent remarks to Eustace. I shall speak to him, however, when I can see a fit opportunity. If he does not choose my family to overrun, as he calls it, the house, neither do I choose to be so tormented."

Not a very propitious beginning for the intimacy Eustace was so anxious to see spring up between the two ladies.

And if Mrs. Vere's thoughts could have been subjected to the same scrutiny, I think they would have run pretty much in this strain:—

"So my young lady does not like it, I can see! but much I care. Thinks herself a beauty, I suppose, with that wax-dollified baby face of her own; but I don't regard her—not I! I am not going to knuckle under, I can tell Mr. Eustace; so he must manage the young lady in the best way he can, for mistress of this house I am determined to be."

Luckily, neither read quite plainly the other's secret thoughts; though, probably, they gave a pretty shrewd guess. But Millicent, having once made up her mind, with a decision of character rarely met with in one so young, became quite self-collected in a moment, and did the honours of her new home with quiet grace.

"I think," said she, rising, "as you are kind enough to stay and put up with what, I fear, will prove a very dull day, we had

better, as you proposed, go up-stairs, so that you may take off your bonnet."

"Thank you, dear Milly!" rejoined Mrs. Vere. "You must let me call you Milly, though Millicent is your proper name; but it is such a mouthful. I remember thinking so, when Eustace used to come to my house, raving about his darling Millicent."

This was said in a half-coaxing, half-bantering tone, as if, quite as a matter of course, such friends should call each other by their Christian names.

Millicent felt her spirit rise, and her blood tingle to her fingers' ends; but she suppressed any outward signs of indignation, and waited till they reached her comfortable dressing-room, when she said, in a tone that admitted of no contradiction,—

"You will excuse me, my dear Mrs. Vere, and I am sure will not take amiss what I am going to say, but I must beg of you not to call me by my Christian name. I have a very great dislike that any one out of my own family should do such a thing; as I also should have to hearing my husband called Eustace; and I am certain you have too much good sense not to see that I had better tell you so,

while we are comparative strangers, than when (which, I hope, will be the case) we become friends."

If a look could have killed her, the baleful glance Mrs. Vere cast upon her would have finished her off at once. But Millicent did not perceive it; and Mrs. Vere, with her very disagreeable laugh, said, much as she would to a spoiled child:—

"Oh, just as you please! for my own part I like to be called by my Christian name, it is so much more sociable and friendly. I hope you will have no objection to Mr. Neville calling me Alice. I shan't know whom he means if he calls me Mrs. Vere."

"I can have no right to interfere with my husband's calling you any name he pleases," returned Millicent, calmly. "He must ever be the best judge of his own actions."

"How like a young wife you speak!" answered Mrs. Vere, sarcastically. "I remember when I was first married, I used to call my husband Mr. Vere every time I spoke to him, I was so proud of the name; so, to break me, he never answered unless I called him Tom."

"Oh, I always call my husband by his

Christian name myself," returned Millicent, composedly, and without noticing the irony intended to be conveyed in Mrs. Vere's remarks. "But now, as you have settled your dress comfortably, we will, if you please, go down to the drawing-room."

Mrs. Vere had no alternative but to do as she was bid, and follow her fair young hostess down-stairs. When they were seated, Millicent, having rung for the morning-papers, placed them before her, saying, in a perfectly civil but decisive tone:—

"I must leave you now for a time, but shall make no apology, because I told you I should be very busy this morning; so I hope you will find something to amuse you in the papers. If not, there is the instrument. I chose it before I went abroad, and can answer for its tone." And without giving Mrs. Vere time to make any remarks she quitted the room.

Had Millicent returned back but for one instant, she would have witnessed a strange performance on the part of her visitor; for, the moment she went away, Mrs. Vere rose from her seat, moved towards the door, and shook her fist as in menace at the retreating

figure; then, setting her teeth hard, muttered, "Insolent girl! I'll teach you to insult me thus. You shall rue it,—you shall! I'll bring down your airs and graces, and tame your proud spirit, or my name is not Alice Vere!"

However, Millicent did not return; but instead, went to her room with a heavy heart. This was not a hopeful beginning: why was she compelled to have a visitor in the house the first day of her return home? and why did her husband so evidently sanction the intrusion? Who was Mrs. Vere? and what claim had she upon Eustace to account for her obtruding herself so frowardly into the house? Millicent could not answer her thoughts satisfactorily. A sort of vague suspicion that this woman would prove a trouble to her, haunted her mind. Not that she had a suspicion of any underhand work; she had such perfect faith in her husband, such reliance on his love, such a deep, such a devoted reverence for him, that to fancy ill of him was impossible. Still Norman's words would ever and anon recur to her memory, and produce feelings of fear and apprehension.

But Millicent possessed a clear head and

a true heart. She saw the way her duty lay, and strictly and conscientiously determined to follow it. She had made her choice, and she would abide by it. She dearly loved her husband; she had taken him for better for worse, faults or no faults; and now she steadily determined to smooth over and make the best of all that struck her as questionable in his conduct, and by constant deference to him, in whatever contributed to his happiness, make his home so delightful to him and herself so necessary to his comfort, that she could easily win him over in matters that affected her personally.

These reflections comforted and re-assured her; and she set to work right heartily, and with the aid of her maid unpacked and arranged her things as quietly and composedly as if Mrs. Vere had been an inhabitant of another hemisphere.

Still, not to seem quite oblivious of her presence, she went up and down with the various costly trifles that had been purchased for the adornment of her rooms, and submitting them to her little visitor's inspection, called upon her for approval as to where she should place this, that, and the other, with

as much ease and *àplomb* as if she had known her all her life.

Mrs. Vere was convulsed with rage, and it was as much as she could do to conceal her vexation, and take in good part the well-bred nothings Millicent addressed to her. She was thoroughly outwitted, and that, too, by a baby-faced school-girl, a bit of a chit she had expected to turn round her finger. It was too bad—it was; but she had no help for it, so she sat fretting and fuming, and only comforting herself with the reflection that the day must come to an end, and that it would be a long time indeed ere she would invite herself again to spend a whole day with Millicent.

And the day did come to an end; and Millicent felt as much rejoiced as her visitor when the dressing-bell rang. She was not a whit more comfortable than Mrs. Vere; for though she had pursued the even tenor of her way as steadily as if she had been alone, her mind was disturbed with the reflection that she had something to discuss with her husband on which, most probably, they would not agree. But she had managed to mortify and put down her obnoxious visitor, and a feeling of feminine triumph swelled in her breast as

she recollected this delightful circumstance. For it was impossible not to see the rage and mortification of the pushing, but now thoroughly discomfited, Mrs. Vere.

Yes, she had conquered her: and I suspect that there is not a wife who reads this but, in her secret heart, will rejoice.

I do not mention this little incident as one of the best points in Millicent's character; but as she is not a fancy sketch, got up expressly for a model novel or romance, but merely a flesh-and-blood woman, I give her bad traits as well as her good.

Mrs. Vere was quite at fault; she could not see her way at all clearly. She had tried hard to coax and flatter Millicent into sociability when she joined her at luncheon, but Millicent rejected all her advances. Perfectly polite and well-bred, she kept a barrier between them, which the other, with all her audacity, could not overcome.

"What time shall you drive and see your mother?" said Mrs. Vere, as a last resource, thinking truly, that by doing the agreeable she might get an ally in good, unsuspecting Mrs. Morley (not so unsuspecting as she thought, by the by), and deeply regretting

that she had not made better use of the opportunity afforded her; but who was to have foreseen that a Guildford-Street Miss was to turn out such a self-possessed, perfectly well-informed woman as Millicent Morley? Madame des Ursins, of famous history, was not more amazed when Elizabeth of Parma ordered her across the Spanish frontier, than was Mrs. Vere at her young hostess's quiet method of keeping her in her place.

"Thank you, I have written to my mother," returned Millicent, gravely, "and have put off my visit until to-morrow."

"Oh! dear, I am sorry you have disappointed yourself of seeing Mrs. Morley on my account; I should quite have enjoyed the drive," said Mrs. Vere, vainly trying to conceal her vexation.

"Oh! it is a very slight disappointment," returned Millicent, with a quiet smile. "I saw mamma yesterday, and to-morrow is not far off."

Mrs. Vere bit her lip, but said nothing; so the afternoon passed away, and when dressing-time came, Millicent, who was still busy arranging her treasures, turned to her guest, and said:—

"I am going to change my dress, and I dare say you would like to arrange yours; will you come up-stairs with me?"

Mrs. Vere joyfully assented, thinking, and truly, that nothing made women grow so sociable with one another, or promoted intimacy so quickly, as unreserved chat in a dressing-room. The very sight of the combs and brushes conduces to good fellowship, and it is difficult to maintain a very frigid reserve while washing hands and combing hair. It was therefore with renewed hope that she followed Millicent up-stairs. But her expectations were speedily dashed by Millicent's opening the door of a spare room, and saying:—

"I will send Thompson to you, to give you any assistance you may require." And without further parley she went into her own room, and closed the door.

This last stroke of policy on the part of the young wife rendered Mrs. Vere quite furious. Not only was she outwitted, but it showed a latent strength of character in Millicent which she was very far from being prepared for.

But repining was useless, and she determined to make the husband of this proud and

unapproachable beauty the agent through whom she would inflict a deadly wound. If she had no power over the wife, thank God, she had power over the husband. Would she not use it? Ay! indeed she would! Just at this moment she heard the street-door open, and the next instant she recognised Eustace's decided step upon the stairs. Hastily drying her hands, and finishing herself off, she dismissed the maid, and hurried down to the drawing-room. She was not mistaken in her conjectures. It was Eustace, who, somewhat impatient, for reasons of his own, to know how things had sped during his absence, hastened up to his wife's dressing-room, expecting to find both ladies there.

"Where is Mrs. Vere?" said he, looking round, and half-alarmed lest something disagreeable had happened, and she had gone off in a huff.

"In the next room, washing her hands, I believe," returned Millicent, carelessly. "But, dear Eustace, do look; see how beautifully the vases have come. I was determined not to let any one see them till you had done so, so did not take them down-stairs."

"You should not have made such a

stranger of Mrs. Vere," returned Eustace, half reproachfully, not taking any notice of the luckless vases. "You know I want you to be great friends: I have known her all my life."

"Oh, dear Eustace," cried Millicent, laughing, "suppose you have; I dare say, in time, we shall be great friends: but you see, dearest, she is quite a stranger at present. I never saw her before to-day, and I am not one to make friendships lightly. Mamma and Miss Andrews will tell you that."

"I should have thought, Millicent," returned her husband, gravely, "that when I told you she was a very old friend of mine, you would not have regarded her as a stranger."

"Oh! I don't know about that," said Millicent, shaking her head rather archly; "that is not such a very enticing recommendation. I wonder what you would say, if I introduced some handsome young man, and begged of you to love and cherish him for my sake."

"Say!" returned Eustace, laughing, spite of his vexation at the droll way in which she put the case—"say, that I grieved I could not comply with your wishes in that respect: but this is quite a different thing."

"No, it is not," returned she merrily.

"But now you must go, for I hear Thompson at the door; and of course, as Mrs. Vere is such an old friend, it is not polite to leave her too long by herself."

"You are a sad, saucy girl," said her husband, holding up his fingers menacingly; and though, at the first onset of the conversation, he felt half disposed to pick a quarrel, yet the sweetness and tact with which she answered him disarmed his wrath, and he left the room in a tolerably good humour.

A very few minutes sufficed for his toilette, and descending the stairs he opened the drawing-room door and went in.

"So you are come at last!" said Mrs. Vere, in a scornful tone. "I wonder my Lady Paramount trusted you out of her sight!"

"What do you mean?" said Neville, knitting his brows.

"Mean!" retorted Mrs. Vere, sharply: "why that, if you don't take care, you won't be long master in your own house. You may do as you please, but I am not going to be put down by a pink-and-white doll like that."

Neville was provoked, or he could have laughed at what he not inaptly termed the cursed jealousy of women; as it was, he

was too much enraged to view anything in the light of a joke.

"Listen, Alice," cried he, in an angry tone. "None of your confounded airs to me, I beg. I shall not stand them, I can tell you. If I had thought you couldn't have played your cards better, I shouldn't have gone round last night and asked you to come here."

"Play my cards better! I have had none to play," muttered the resentful little woman: but just at that moment the door opened and Millicent came in.

She looked radiantly lovely, and Eustace could not resist a throb of triumph as he remembered that this matchless creature was all his own.

Mrs. Vere noted his glance of undisguised admiration with jealous hatred, and she registered deep in the recesses of her heart a solemn vow, that if it were possible for mortal woman to destroy the happiness of the two beings before her she would do it.

How well she kept that vow we shall see.

The dinner passed off gaily enough. Eustace was determined to do all in his power to promote a better understanding between the two ladies, and thus counteract the bad im-

pression his wife had evidently conceived of Mrs. Vere; and as, when he chose, he could be quite irresistible, before he rose from table he had put things on a much more comfortable footing, for Millicent loved her husband so fervently, that the very sight of him brought sunshine to her breast; and acting upon the plan already matured in her young heart, of making his home a happy one, she exerted herself to the utmost of her power to please him.

Even Mrs. Vere was not insensible to the charm of her manner when she did unbend, and as she had fully made up her mind to clear the house of her obnoxious visitor, and reduce that lady's extravagant friendship down to a cool acquaintanceship, and as she knew it could not be managed without considerable tact, she set all her feminine skill to work to accomplish her purpose. That she in some measure succeeded may be inferred from the fact, that her husband preferred sending Mrs. Vere home in the carriage, to seeing her to her lodging, as originally proposed.

CHAPTER V.

THE WIFE AND THE MISTRESS.

"I DID not expect this of you, Millicent," said Eustace, moodily, as they discussed their plans the next morning at breakfast. "What possible cause can there be for your having taken such a dislike to Mrs. Vere? She is a very well-informed, ladylike woman—a very good-tempered woman—is well versed in the ways of the world, and could give you some excellent advice if she chose; and I am sure," added he, looking admiringly at his fair young wife, "you have too much real beauty to fear the presence of it in any one else."

"You mistake my meaning quite, dear Eustace," said Millicent, calmly. "I have nothing to say, either for or against Mrs. Vere. I am certainly not particularly prepossessed in her favour, nor do I exactly relish

the idea of any one running in and out of the house at all hours and seasons."

"I do not see why you should fancy Mrs. Vere is going to do that," returned Eustace, in an offended tone.

"I think it looks something like it," answered Millicent, with spirit, "when the very first day she rushes in the moment after breakfast, and when asked to come and dine at seven o'clock, coolly divests herself of her bonnet and shawl, and takes possession of the house."

"Well, Millicent, I should have thought that, instead of disliking her for such an act of kindness, you would have felt very grateful to her for wishing to sacrifice a whole day to you. But there is no understanding women—not the best of them."

"I am sorry I am such a riddle," said Millicent, smiling, "and suppose I am not of a grateful turn, for I confess I thought her conduct very like indelicate officiousness. Perhaps you think, also, that I ought to be grateful to her for calling us both by our Christian names?"

"And what harm if she does?" cried Neville, a little fiercely.

"None, whatever," answered Millicent, somewhat surprised at the warmth of his manner. "Of course I cannot prevent her taking that liberty with you, if you sanction her doing so; but, as far as I am concerned, Mrs. Vere shall never 'Millicent' me."

She spoke with so much firmness and self-possession, that Eustace was for the moment quite petrified. Was this the young girl he had married to mould exactly as he wished? Had he condescended to pluck a wayside flower out of such a desert as the unknown regions of Bloomsbury, and then find that it possessed a strong will of its own? He was so discomfited with this discovery, that for some minutes he could not collect his thoughts enough to know what to say next.

Millicent saw her advantage, and, like a true woman, she followed it up.

"Now, dearest Eustace," and she laid her white hand upon his arm, looking up at the same time into his face with the most imploring tenderness, "do not let us disagree, or have words about such a trifle. Of course you know, dearest, I will do anything you like; only give me time. I dare say, when I know more of Mrs. Vere, I shall like her;

but just now, my head—and heart too," she added, coaxingly, and putting up her rosy lips to be kissed, "are quite full of you and this dear new home you have given me; and I don't wish even that my own relations, much less a stranger, should come between me and my happiness."

What could Eustace say to such an affectionate appeal? Nothing. So he swallowed his vexation, though, it must be confessed, with a very ill grace, and kissed the pretty little mouth held up so lovingly to his acceptance. But, ungracious as he was, Millicent's first triumph was gained. Had she, instead of warding and parrying off the disagreeable subject he had broached, reminded him of how disrespectfully he had spoken of her family, and drawn obnoxious comparisons between them and Mrs. Vere, Eustace would have given way to his temper, and the inevitable consequence would have been a quarrel—THE FIRST QUARREL!

O wives, beware of the first QUARREL! As Rochefoucault says of a lover, it is never the LAST. As you hope for happiness, avoid and turn from a quarrel as you would from some deadly poison. Some persons argue that

quarrels are the renewal of love. Fallacious reasoning! In the first months, perhaps, of married life, a man may feel a generous pleasure in forgiving and taking to his heart again his penitent wife; he may even feel pleased at noting the infirmity of her temper, and comparing it with his own less excitable nature. But a frequent recurrence of such scenes will soon make them pall upon his taste. Men abhor tears: perhaps, because their conscience tells them that they are generally the cause of them; and therefore, what in the first quarrel he tried to soothe, in the last he ends by steeling his heart against. If women did but know the blessing that follows a soft word or a quiet answer — if their hearts were but filled a little more with tender submissive feelings, instead of their heads being crammed so full of superficial accomplishments, which, however much they may help to win a man's fickle fancy, never retain his firm and fixed affections, how much more of happiness would be found by the domestic fireside, and how much less work would there be cut out for Sir Cresswell Cresswell!

Eustace felt baffled. It was such a

contemptible thing to make savage war on the young creature before him, just because, with the shrinking delicacy of youth, she drew back from taking an entire stranger into her home and heart. Besides, the reason she gave was so flattering to himself, it was impossible to quarrel with it; nevertheless, he would much rather she had given him an opportunity of enforcing upon her the necessity of allowing Mrs. Vere to make their house her home.

It must be done, too, for he could not afford to lose Mrs. Vere: she was essential to his comfort, for she excused his foibles and ministered to his vanity; and he knew, by painful experience, how her tropical blood fired up if she did not get everything her own way.

He could, surely, more easily subdue the gentle creature before him, than quell the fiery spirit that was no way inferior to his own in obstinacy, and being determined to make the effort, he said, hastily:—

"Well, I suppose it must be as you wish, though I am not quite pleased with you. You are not my good little girl this morning. And pray, as you won't let poor Alice into

your enchanted palace, may I presume to ask what you mean to do with yourself all day?"

"Order dinner—finish the rest of my unpacking—and then go and see mamma," answered Millicent, cheerfully.

"Going to Guildford Street?" repeated Eustace, his brow darkening. "Well, I don't mind for to-day; but as we are talking I may as well be frank with you. You don't like my friends, Millicent, and tell me so quite plainly, so I have less scruple in not standing upon ceremony with you. I do not like your family, and don't mean my house to be overrun with your riotous brothers and sisters."

The bright smile faded from Millicent's face, and tears filled her eyes. She was not blind to the defects of her family, but she felt with truth that Eustace was not the person to point them out, and that he took a cruel advantage in thus revenging Mrs. Vere upon them. But she subdued the temper she felt rising within, and answered mildly:—

"You are right, Eustace: for the sake of our mutual happiness it will be always better to speak plainly. God forbid that I should have a thought unknown to you, or do anything that militates against your comfort! I

will not ask any of my relations here without your permission; but of course, when I am out driving, you can have no objection to my calling sometimes upon them?"

Baffled again! Baffled in the most annoying way, too! for let me tell you when an irritable man, not blest with an over-stock of patience, finds that he cannot make a pretext for getting into a rage, he is generally in a most uncomfortable frame of mind.

Such was Eustace at that minute. He bit his lip, and finding that he could not get his own way in any one particular, nor yet accuse Millicent of preventing him, he hastily kissed her, and promising to be back in time to ride with her in the Park, went down-stairs. A moment after she feared, by the peculiar slam of the street-door, that her lord and master had departed in no little anger.

She sighed; she could not help it. The fair castle she had built up so very high in the air, whose turrets, she fondly hoped, would reach quite into Elysium, seemed about to crumble into dust,—to sink deep, deep, beneath her feet. She looked round at her splendid room, at her *recherché* breakfast-service, at her pictures and her flowers, and

asked herself, "Was this gorgeous home to be but a gilded prison after all?"

Yes, if she were not to have liberty of speech and action it would be nothing better. Perhaps, after all, she had better have married Norman Austin!

She repented of the thought ere it had time to frame itself into words.

What! Repent that she was the wife of Eustace Neville, her first, her only love? Impossible! Come weal, come woe, she could never repent of being the wife of the man of her heart.

But what should she do?—what did she do? Why, what it would be better if all we frail creatures did when clouds intervene and darken our horizon. Her young pure spirit turned involuntarily to the Giver of all goodness, and found refuge in prayer.

She prayed, and her prayers were heard,—she felt that they were, by the renewed hope that sprang up in her breast; and without giving herself time for further forebodings, she went steadily about her morning's occupation.

Eustace in the meanwhile, as we have seen, walked off in high dudgeon, exasperated to think that he had not been able to manage

such a yielding creature as Millicent. Had she given way to temper, or airs, or hysterics, or any of the thousand-and-one arts which her sex is usually supposed to indulge in, he could have understood it; but she had not: on the contrary, she had, to all appearance, cheerfully submitted herself to his wishes; and yet, before he went to the City, he felt it was incumbent on him to call on Mrs. Vere, and prevent her going to Upper Brook Street, as had been agreed between them the evening before.

His unpleasant reflections lasted till he reached Connaught Place, Edgeware Road, where Mrs. Vere had apartments. As he was the guardian appointed by her husband to see after her worldly advantages during his absence, and as all her husband's letters were directed to her under cover to Eustace at his office, the people of the house were quite accustomed to his appearance at all times and seasons.

Accordingly he entered unchallenged, and, mounting the stairs, opened the drawing-room door without the formality of a knock, and went in.

Mrs. Vere was reclining upon a sofa near the window; the room, though small, was

nicely furnished, and the books, flowers, and music that were strewed about betokened the habitation of a lady.

She was dressed very prettily, in an open white dress tied with pale pink, while ribbons of the same colour adorned a little cap that was placed jauntily at the back of her head. She was a good deal past her *première jeunesse*, but was well preserved, and evidently took great care of herself: few but very close observers could have discovered where the false ringlets were placed in the mass that floated round her cheeks, or whether the delicate bloom of her complexion were due to nature or art.

She rose up with a cry of pleasure as Eustace, after cautiously closing the door, advanced towards her, and, springing into his half-opened arms, held him apparently quite distractedly to her heart.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" cried she, gazing up into his face with an intensity of rapture that it seemed impossible not to believe real. "What joy to see you once again! the more so, as I dared not hope for it now, with such a wife as yours, so devoted as you are to her, and so imperatively determined as she is to keep you ever at her side. I feared—

ah, I dreaded"—and here the wily littel lady forced a sob—"that your poor despised little Alice would never see you again."

It is astonishing, with all their boasted wisdom, what perfect fools men are. After all, I do believe their hearts are much softer, much kinder, and more affectionate than ours; and that the grand secret of our success lies in playing upon the better feelings of their nature. Once persuade a man that your life depends upon his love, and he is your slave. Thus it is, generally speaking, that the most truthful and high-minded of our sex—women who cannot stoop to such petty arts—are the least loved by the lords of the creation.

Eustace verified the truth of what I have just said. He looked down upon the little clinging, sobbing, quivering, and, as he thought, doting creature before him, and his pure, fair, noble-minded, yet firm Millicent, sank in the scale.

Had not this woman given up everything for him? And yet she never disputed his wishes; even if she did give way to passion, he could always manage her. She looked up to him, adored him. She was not content with just simply loving him. He was bound to her

long before he knew Millicent, and he would not forsake her now. Millicent should not slight her: no, she should not; and he returned her pressure affectionately, and, seating her gently on the sofa, sat down beside her.

"It is so very, very good of you to come," murmured she, clasping his arm between her two hands, while her perfumed and scented ringlets waved over his shoulder. "I was afraid—I fancied——"

"What?" said he, fondly.

"That you would quite desert and despise me, as I see your wife does," returned she.

"Nonsense, Alice!" said he, hastily: "this must be all fancy."

"Neither nonsense nor fancy," returned she, archly: "what I say is true, and so you will discover. Mark my words, your wife begins by despising your friends; she will end by despising yourself."

Mrs. Vere's shaft hit home. Eustace's brow darkened, but he only said, impatiently:—

"Well, never mind if she does. I did not come to discuss her merits or demerits, I

came to tell you not to go there this morning."

"And why not?" returned Mrs. Vere, rather shortly.

"Why not? because I say so," said Eustace, doggedly. "Is not that reason enough?"

"No!" retorted she, fiercely, raising herself up out of his arms. "It is not enough? I will know the reason why."

"You will — will you?" answered he, still more curtly. "Then the reason is, she won't have you. I told you yesterday that you had played your cards cursed ill."

"She won't have me! She, indeed!" gasped forth Mrs. Vere, almost inarticulate with rage. "She shall have me! I will go there! I will be as much mistress in your house as she is. Didn't you promise I should? Didn't you say, that if I would but let you marry her, I should come and live in the house, and be mistress?"

"And so you may yet, if you don't make such a confounded fool of yourself," returned Eustace, struggling to suppress his passion. "Curse the woman!" muttered he, between his teeth. "She will spoil all now, if I don't take care."

"Yes, I will spoil all!" cried the little beauty, who overheard his last remark. "I will spoil all! I did not give up all for you, to be treated in this manner—to be put on one side, and obliged, forsooth, to be under the command of a baby-faced chit like that!"

"Who the devil wants you to be under the command of any one?" burst forth Eustace, unable any longer to control his temper. "Now hearken, Alice. This must cease. This folly can't go on. I never have yet been the slave of any woman. So help me —— I never will! If you can't subdue your feelings, we must part—that's all."

"Part from me at your peril, sir!" cried Mrs. Vere, with flashing eyes; "and as sure as my name is Alice Vere I will walk to Brook Street and tell your wife—yes, the wife you are so proud of; the wife for whom I am despised—the whole truth. The darling! she shall know what an immaculate creature she has married."

"You dare to threaten me?" said Eustace, sternly. "You presume—you—to tell me—ay! me—Eustace Neville—that you will betray me—that you will blacken me to my wife? You will—will you? Go, madam, go!

I thank you," added he, bitterly, " for undeceiving me as to your true character. Henceforth we are as strangers." And, snatching his hat off the table, he sprang to the door.

Mrs. Vere saw her mistake, and felt that she had gone a step too far. She had no time to deliberate: one instant more, and she was lost. Quick as thought, she darted to the door before him. The handle trembled in his grasp. Another second, and he would have been across the threshold; never, never, to return!

But it was not to be.

Where was his guardian angel at that minute?

Alas! where?

Not by his side! And Millicent, was hers absent also?

Ay! but hers was purposely so. She was to be purified by affliction, only to shine forth all the brighter.

One instant more, and he would have been through and on the other side, safe from Mrs. Vere's witcheries. She knew it; and sinking frantically on her knees, she caught him by the skirt of his coat.

" Oh! stay — stay — Eustace! Forgive

—forgive me! I know not what I have said."

"Let me go, woman!" he exclaimed, passionately, and trying forcibly to unwrench himself from her grasp. "Let me go, I tell you, this moment! or I will call up the people of the house and disgrace you."

"Do so! I care not," cried she, wildly, and bursting out into a passion of hysterical tears. "What do I care for what they know, if I lose you? Oh, don't, don't go! You will break my heart if you do!"

"I will go!" muttered Eustace, fiercely. But he did not stir, nevertheless.

"Don't say so!" sobbed the apparently wretched woman. "If you leave me thus, I will destroy myself. I swear," cried she, madly, "that I will not live without you. Leave me, and I will never survive my loss!" And unclasping her hands, evidently unable any longer to retain her hold, she sank, to all appearance, lifeless on the floor.

And did Eustace leave her? No! Carefully, and with something almost like contrition, he lifted her lifeless form in his arms, and tried, by the fondest endearments and caresses, to restore her to herself. And at

last Mrs. Vere, who, partly for the purpose and partly from real fright, had worked herself into a most deplorable condition, consented to calm her emotion, and to suffer her tears to be wiped away—to lay her head upon his breast—to promise obedience—and to make him believe that, however faulty she was, however much she had erred, he, and he alone, was all she cared to live for.

And such is the intense vanity of man's nature, that Eustace positively believed every word she uttered, and went to his club with the self-gratified feeling that the very life and existence of the being he had just left depended upon the shake of his head and the wave of his hand.

Yes! man has a strong yearning for disinterested love; much more so than woman. Once convince a man that you love him, truly for himself—for his own self—independently of riches, rank, station, position, or any of the thousand-and-one advantages he may be possessed of—only, I say, make him feel that, and you need not be very nice about the mode in which you go to work. Men are as voracious as boa-constrictors, they will swallow almost any quantity of flattery, provided always

that it be offered at the right time. It won't do to flatter one man in the presence of another. Be careful of that; but let a woman take the lucky moment, seize upon the right opportunity, and she may make a man—ay, in spite of all his wondrous sense and reason—her slave for life.

And thus it is that, to satisfy that intense craving after pure and unalloyed affection, men make such grand mistakes, and surrender themselves and their belongings into the hands of the most worthless and designing of our sex.

If it were not so, how could we otherwise account for the scenes that occur daily around us? Every hour—every day—men leave their fine mansions—their well-appointed households—their well-born, well-educated, nay, often beautiful wives—their lovely, their innocent children—and all for what? To enjoy the idle talk—nay, perhaps, vulgar conversation—of some unhappy creature whom they have lured from the path of duty, and who possesses no accomplishments—perhaps not even a tithe of the personal attractions of their own neglected helpmates.

How is this paradox to be explained? In

one word,—man believes that this poor, despised, frail daughter of Eve, LOVE'S HIM—has renounced her good name—lost her fair fame—sacrificed all that is worth living for—and all for HIM!

His wife married him doubtless for love! True! but for other advantages also. She married for wealth—or perhaps a presentation at Court—for a well-appointed establishment—for a good carriage and horses—for jewels—for all the pomps and vanities of this sinful world; and much as she may love him, she does not think it incumbent on her to disguise from him that she loves his worldly advantages also.

Thus, in spite of good sense, of morality, in spite of his better feelings, man will be always more the slave of the bond-woman than of the free. And thus it is (and the pity is that it is so seldom), that when a woman enters upon married life with the rare tact of concealing her intense appreciation of the pleasures of this world, but instead makes the giver of them feel in his grateful heart that all the possessions he endows her with are but valued by her in proportion as she can turn them to account in ministering to

his comfort and happiness, she rarely or ever loses her hold on his affections.

Yes! when a woman does do that, she makes of her home an earthly paradise, and is a crown of glory to her husband. Alas, that necessity should make one class of women do what all the education in the world cannot inspire in the other!

Millicent numbered her husband first, when blessing her Heavenly Father for the good bestowed upon her; but she also considered that she had many other blessings to be thankful for.

Mrs. Vere's despairing cry was,—Give me my lover: I want nought else.

Eustace felt that one loved him as an equal, the other worshipped him as a god.

And thus it was that the bad triumphed over the good!

Circumstances, too, have great weight in the daily affairs of life. If Eustace had passed through that door, Millicent would never have lived to rue the hour when she rejected honest Norman Austin.

The disappointment of his hopes had done wonders for Norman. A man who is crossed in love is sure to do one of two things; either

marry out of pique, or devote himself to whatever his calling in life may be.

Norman Austin had loved too profoundly, too devotedly, ever to think of placing a new idol in the shrine which had been so religiously kept for Millicent, so he took his profession to his embrace instead; and though she was but a dry-dusty sort of goddess to follow in the steps of his beautiful cousin, still she so inspired his tongue and nerved his efforts, that men listened, and marvelled, and thought a second Solomon had come to light. And as his talents expanded, his heart opened, and he could look with charity upon Eustace, and think of Millicent with a soft and tender regret. The fierce sunbeams which had hitherto scorched up and rendered barren the fertile soil of his breast, had toned down into a calm and mellow twilight, and he felt able to look upon Millicent with feelings of brotherly affection, instead of the bitter sensation of disappointed love. For that reason, when Eustace asked him later in the day to go home and dine with them, he cheerfully accepted the invitation; and it was Millicent, not Norman, who coloured and looked confused when they met.

CHAPTER VI.

CLERKENWELL.

CLERKENWELL is a mass of buildings of a poorer class than Camden or Somers Town. There is a decided gradation of aristocracy even in the lower, or people's estate, and thus Camden Town has ever maintained a superiority over its adjacent neighbours.

When the unhappy mother of Violet awoke the next morning from the uneasy sleep she had fallen into the night of the strange man's visit, it was with a pained, heavy feeling, as though some dreadful misfortune hung over her.

Gradually, as recollection returned, the scene of the previous night came back to her heart with fearful reality, and she turned and clasped her sleeping child to her breast with so much terrified vehemence, that Violet woke up in a fright.

"What is the matter, mamma?" cried

she. "Is papa gone? When did he go? I lay and listened; but at last I fell asleep. Isn't it morning?" and she rubbed her sleepy eyes. Then, as her mother made no answer, she added, "Oh, mamma, why do you look so strange?"

Well might the child ask the question, for her mother still held her in her frenzied grasp: and there was a wild light in her eyes, that betokened some fearful struggle going on within.

"Oh, don't look so, mamma! please, don't!" cried Violet, trying to disengage herself; for the tightness of her mother's grasp hurt her. "Oh, dear mamma, speak to me! answer me!"

For a moment or so the woman looked fixedly at her; then, relinquishing her hold, she sat up in the bed, and drawing the child to her bosom said, gently but firmly:—

"Violet, I am going to confide a great secret to your keeping, and you must promise me that what I tell you shall never be revealed by you to any one."

"Yes, mamma," said the child, earnestly, and looking up in her mother's eyes with the most trusting fondness.

"Violet," resumed the woman, "do you know the nature of an oath?"

"An oath, mamma?" repeated the child, with a puzzled air. "Is not an oath a thing one swears to God to keep, and if we break it he punishes us, and is very angry?"

"Yes!" said the woman, passionately: "punishes you, not only in this world but the next. Do you understand, my child, if you take an oath and break it you will never see heaven?"

"But I won't break it, mamma," said the child, innocently; "I will keep it—I promise you I will."

"You promise me?" cried the woman, hoarsely; "then repeat these words after me: I promise, on my soul's salvation, never to repeat what you are going to tell me."

Violet repeated the words in a calm, possessed manner, and when she had finished said, gravely—

"Now, mamma, tell me what makes you so unhappy."

"Violet," said her mother, solemnly, "my days, I feel, are numbered, or I should not do as I am going to do, but there is no help for

it. Listen to me—you will never see your papa again."

"Never see papa again!" cried the astonished child. "And why not, mamma?"

"Last night," pursued the woman, heedless of the interruption, "he came here to take you away from me."

"Take me away, mamma? But I would not have gone!" said the child, with a resolute air.

"And he would have carried me back to the West Indies," pursued the woman. "Oh! Heavenly Father!" cried she, bursting into an agony of tears: "Oh, God, if he should come back again!"

"Never mind, mamma," said Violet, caressingly. "Papa could not take me away, because I would not go. I would tell him that it made you unhappy."

"Ah! you don't know what he can do," returned her mother, sadly; "therefore, Violet, I have made up my mind to go away, where your papa can never find us."

"Go away!" cried Violet, looking very blank, "and never see dear papa again! Oh, mamma!"

"Do you love me, Violet?" cried her

mother, clasping her tightly, and looking with her whole soul into the child's eyes.

"Oh, yes, mamma!" cried the child, fondly, and throwing her arms around her neck; "but I love papa also."

"I know you do," sobbed the wretched woman; "I know it. Oh, my God!" she cried, clasping her hands together, "hear my prayer—forgive my sins—spare me—spare me!"

"Don't cry, mamma," said Violet, a dim perception of the truth flashing across her childish mind. "Don't cry—I love you, and I will never go away from you."

The woman made no answer, but she held the child to her heart with frantic desperation.

"Violet," at length she murmured, "I am going to tell you what, perhaps, will make you hate me; but it must be told, Violet,—I never was married to your papa."

"Never what, mamma?" cried the child, not in the least comprehending what her mother meant.

"My child," said the woman, solemnly, you are too young, at present, to understand the meaning of my words; but some day you

will sorrowfully learn their purport. I am not your father's wife, child; remember that, and never tell it either: for if you do, every one will look down upon and despise me."

"They shan't, while I live," said the child, proudly. "But why did not papa marry you?"

"Ah! why, indeed?" muttered the woman, wrathfully; then recovering herself she added, more gently:—

"I don't know, my darling, save that I was not good enough; and now I fancy he wishes to marry some one else. Hearken, Violet"—seeing the child about to interrupt her—"I have no time to spare to tell you the whole story of my life, but will at a more fitting season, and then you will know how your mother has been wronged. What I want to tell you now is this:—Your father came last night, and wished to put you to school, and send or take me back to my own country. I would not hear of parting with you, and at last he consented to leave you. But I cannot trust him," cried she, with a burst of irrepressible anguish. "He may alter his mind, and come back only to tear you from my arms."

"I won't go with him!" cried the child, her dark swarthy features kindling with anger: "he makes you cry, and I shall hate him!"

"Oh! you must not hate your father," answered the woman, with relenting fondness. "Always remember, Violet, that he is your father!"

"Yes! but you say he has injured you, and disgraced me; and that I am not a young lady, nor anything," returned Violet, moodily.

"You are as much a young lady as ever," said the woman, impetuously, "and your father is a gentleman: but I cannot part with you for all that; and I am afraid he will come back after all, and take you away; and so, Violet, I am going to sell all the things we are worth, except our clothes, and go away where he cannot find us."

"What! sell my chain?" cried Violet, disconsolately, and looking out on the table where it lay.

"No, my darling," said her mother, fondly; "but you must not wear it. For, Violet, we shall be very poor, and you will have to wear very poor clothes."

The child looked greatly disgusted and dissatisfied at this announcement; she shrugged

her shoulders, and asked in an apprehensive tone—"Shall I look as common and dirty as Mrs. Cooper's little girls, mamma?"

"Not dirty, my child. God forbid you should ever look that! but you will be quite as poorly clad," said the woman, sorrowfully.

Violet made no answer to this unpleasant piece of information; but an attentive observer might have seen by the working of her countenance what a war was raging within.

And they would have seen right! Violet inherited not only the tropical blood of the father, but all the dark passions of the Quadroon mother. The love of dress, show, display, riches, and grandeur, which are so much the characteristics of their race, found a place in her young heart, while the more deadly passions of hatred and revenge found also an abiding-place. Hitherto she had cherished in her young breast a passionate love for the father, who had given her all the luxuries of her childish life, and who was, by her mother's account, finally to give her a grand position in the world; now that she found that, not only did he mean to withdraw all those advantages, but actually cause grief to her adored mother, all the

fiery, unmanageable passions of her nature got the mastery, and insensibly she felt a feeling of hatred against her father spring up in her breast, and she longed, quite as much as her mother, never to see him again.

These reflections made her enter most readily into her mother's plans, and so active were both mother and child, that ere nightfall every article of value, except their clothes and ornaments, had been disposed of; the apartments in Green Street given up, and Mrs. Cooper informed that they were obliged to go quite unexpectedly to Liverpool to embark for the West Indies: to give a colour to this, the cab that was to convey themselves and their slender belongings out of the house was ordered to the Euston Square Station.

There the man took them, and there he deposited them, and there they booked their luggage and went in search of a lodging.

This, after a two or three hours' search, they found in a decent but obscure street in Clerkenwell, and having settled with the person of the house to occupy a scantily-furnished room on the second floor, they returned to the railway station, fetched away their luggage, and, ere night, were as completely lost to the

man who had exerted such a mysterious influence over their movements, as if they had vanished into another hemisphere.

Mrs. Newton, for such was the name the woman assumed on reaching her new home, was not far out in her conjectures. The very night of her departure the man again called in Green Street, to the no small surprise of the landlady, who naturally concluded he was gone with them.

Not that she laboured under any fanciful delusions as to the woman being his wife—she felt quite certain she was not. But that was no concern of hers. Green Street was so used to receive ladies and ask no inquisitive questions, that it had become an everyday occurrence.

The man, however, was much annoyed, and cross-questioned the mistress of the house in every possible way, so as to find out a clue to where they had betaken themselves; but he was foiled. Mrs. Cooper was thoroughly English, and she did not relish the imperative, slave-driving, domineering manner in which he put his questions; added to which, she had a tender pity for her own sex, and, as she afterwards told her husband the policeman,

"she warn't a-going to gratify such a proud fellow's curiosity nohows, who had lived among blacks, she was sure, all his life, till he didn't know how to speak to a respectable married woman! She warn't a-going to send him ramping after that poor thing and her child. For," continued the honest woman, wiping the perspiration off her shining face, "I have heard him many a night, when he thought every one was a-bed and asleep, storming her life out."

Mr. Cooper, her husband, assented with a quiet grunt. It was no business of his. If the gentleman did not choose to apply at the district police office, it was not incumbent on any member of that honourable force to give him gratuitous information.

Therefore all the knowledge Violet's father could obtain from the landlady of the house, amounted to the satisfactory intelligence that Violet and her mother went away in a cab that morning, but that she did not know where.

"What! and taken all their things?" said the man in a surprised tone.

"No! she sold them to a broker," returned the landlady, somewhat maliciously.

"Didn't you know what she was going to do?" added she, in an inquisitive tone.

"Oh, yes! I knew, I knew!" muttered the man, in a perturbed tone of voice. "Of course, she will write. I knew," added he, haughtily, seeing the woman slightly grin, "that she was going, but did not think she would go quite so soon. Good evening to you." And with a stately bow he walked away.

"You knew, did you?" said Mrs. Cooper, making a not very complimentary face at him, when he turned his back. "Then, if you knew, what did you come here to ask for?" And so saying, she shut the door and went back to her supper.

"Very strange!" muttered the man to himself, as he walked hastily along: "like her, though. Now what's to be done? She is gone, and taken the child with her—that's clear; and when she has spent what money she has, what's to become of them? Botheration seize the woman, what a confounded fool she is! Fancies I want the child! just as if I did! Suppose I overacted my part last night. Curse the woman!" he added, in a still more passionate tone. "Couldn't she

have done what I told her? I have half a mind to wash my hands of her altogether; and yet—and yet—she must not be left to starve. I will apply to the police. No, that won't do," he continued, answering his thoughts aloud. "It won't do to run the slightest risk of discovery at this particular moment; nor will it suit me to stir in the matter in my own proper character." He walked on in silence. "I have got it!" burst from his lips at last, after a long and lengthy meditation. "I will put an advertisement in the 'Times;'" and evidently relieved in mind at this thought, he turned hastily into the Regent's Park, and was soon lost to sight.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEATH OF THE ERRING ONE.

The events I have just narrated took place, as my readers will recollect, the day after the betrothal of Millicent to Mr. Neville; and all had gone as merry with them as with a marriage bell.

Six months, as we have seen, had passed over their heads, in one unbroken round of happiness and felicity; and while they were enjoying themselves to the utmost of their capability, Rose and her child had remained fixed in their humble lodgings in Clerkenwell.

Ah, how differently time is meted out to different persons! While the summer had risen and set only to increase the happiness of Millicent and her husband, and add to their pleasure, in that back-room in Cross Street, Clerkenwell, it had only risen and set upon

a soul, wending its slow, yet certain passage to the tomb.

And while each day served to show Eustace and his wife some new wonder, some fresh delight, they only helped to show Violet that her mother's cheek grew paler and thinner; and to the mother they told with a pang that none but a mother can feel, that ere a few short months would be over her head, her earthly career would be run, and her loved and idolised child left alone in a cold and pitiless world.

And while each new day broke upon the travellers, and served to increase their knowledge of nature and art—while they lingered fondly in the green valleys of Switzerland, and loitered in the sunny plains of Italy—those self-same days dawned over the unwholesome district of Clerkenwell, and showed Rose and her child busily engaged in shirt-making.

Yes, it had come to that at last!

Sparingly and frugally as they had lived, their slender stock of money had long been exhausted. Then went their ornaments; all but Violet's chain—her mother had not the heart to ask her to give that: perhaps, too, she thought it wise to keep something whereby

the child might identify her father when she (the mother) was gone; and, alas! she knew that must soon be, for she already felt that her days were numbered.

From the moment she left Green Street her strength gradually diminished. The shock of parting for ever with the father of her child (for she loved him) had, unknown to herself, served greatly to increase her disorder, and taken a deep-seated hold of her constitution; and now, what with mental sorrow, bad living, and impure air, she grew so seriously ill that, before she had been many months at Clerkenwell, it was necessary to call in a medical man to see her.

He was the Union Doctor; good-hearted, but somewhat rough. Such a character as might be expected in a man who received a mere pittance for curing and tending all the sick and poverty-stricken souls in the parish. Nevertheless, Evelyn Jones had a kind heart.

He pitied the poor dying mother; the helpless, yet interesting child: and one day, coming in softly, he heard her singing the Evening Hymn, and stood transfixed with admiration.

"Why, what a voice you have got, little girl!" said he, laying his hand kindly upon her head as she finished, and her rich notes were dying away. "Why, if that voice were cultivated, you would make your fortune!"

The child reddened, and drew back haughtily enough, for she had not lost her old spirit; and the mother, who, like all the descendants of slaves, held public singing and dancing in great contempt, ejaculated hastily:—

"God forbid that my child should ever sing for a living! I would rather she worked at shirt-making all the days of her life!"

The doctor only nodded. He had seen, at the first glance, that his patient and her child had been what is commonly called better off, and he was too much of a gentleman to insult them by gratuitous advice. Yet, as he watched the child's fingers going up and down mechanically at her work, and looked in her pale, wan, pinched little face, he did think, that if she had really nothing better than a life of hard work in store for her, it was a shame such a glorious voice should be wasted. But his cogitations were cut short by a violent fit of coughing from the woman, and he turned hastily to the bed;

while Violet, dropping her work, flew to support her mother's head.

The fit was obstinate, and resisted all the doctor's efforts to stop it; and when at last, exhausted and worn out, she sank back panting upon her pillow, he felt in his own mind that a few more such violent attacks would carry her off.

"Have you any relations in town?" asked he, abruptly.

A deep red flush overspread the woman's hollow face, and she answered, somewhat shortly:—

"No! I am a stranger here. Why do you ask?"

Mr. Jones glanced at Violet; then taking out his watch, he said, kindly:—

"Put on your bonnet, and run up and down before the house for five minutes; you look pale, and the air will do you good. I will sit with your mother while you go."

Violet looked at her mother, who inclined her head languidly in token of assent; and the child, taking down her bonnet off a peg, speedily disappeared.

Mr. Jones drew a chair to the bedside,

and sat down; then he said, quietly but distinctly:—

"It is no use deceiving you—it would be but cruel kindness if I did: therefore, if you have anything to settle, any one you would wish written to about your child, I would advise you to do it soon."

He paused. Accustomed as he was to the sight of distress—familiar as he was with scenes of misery—still the anguished look of the woman, as she turned her dark imploring eyes upon him, arrested his speech. Slowly she raised herself in the bed, and said hoarsely:—

"I have no friends. No, not one!" repeated she emphatically, seeing him about to speak,—"not one!"

"Yes! One!" returned the doctor, impressively, touched by the profound desolation of her speech: "One that never forsakes His children. You have God above."

"Have I?" said she, listlessly. "I think not. God must have forsaken me, or I should not be so desolate."

"He never forsakes us," answered the doctor, firmly. "It is we who forsake Him."

"You are right!" returned she, with vehemence. "I have forsaken Him, sinned, and

done evil. And now — now He abandons me!"

"But He is always open to the prayers of the penitent," gently returned the doctor. "God is a God of mercy as well as of wrath, and I think I can guess the extent of your sin."

He spoke significantly, for with an unerring instinct, gained by his frequent intercourse with the poor fallen daughters of humanity, he had rightly guessed, that though a mother she was not a wife, and that though she might have friends, she had no husband.

She looked at him fixedly, but though her wan cheek flushed scarlet, her voice was cold and passionless as she answered:—

"You are quite right in your conjectures. I have no husband: neither have I any friends in England. I come from a long way off; and he who brought me from my own country has bound me by a solemn oath — so solemn, that my soul's salvation is the peril of my breaking it — not to divulge who he is, or aught about him."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Jones, who was a plain, practical man, and hated romance and folly of any sort. "Nonsense! such an oath

is not binding. You must tell me directly who this man is, that, as the father of your child, could take such a mean advantage of you, that I may immediately write to him. He can't be good for much," added he, "or he would not have deserted you, and left you to starve."

"He didn't leave me to starve," returned the woman, eagerly. "No! he is not so bad as you think."

"Then how came you here?" interrupted her straightforward doctor.

"I left him," answered the woman, doggedly.

"The old story!" muttered the doctor to himself. "She left him, or he left her—it doesn't much signify which. But I must make her tell me who he is."

But this he found beyond his power. The woman resolutely refused to give up his name; and when asked where he lived, protested she did not know. She said that they had not lived together for some years, but that he had always provided for her and the child, and occasionally came and saw her. That it was in consequence of his wish to remove the child that she had left the lodgings

he placed her in, without giving any address or clue whereby he might trace her. Hence her bitter poverty and want of means. Mr. Jones also got from her, but with extreme reluctance, that she was a native of the West Indies, but which island she steadfastly refused to say. This was all he could drag out of her; and at last, annoyed at her perverse silence, he rose to go, saying, angrily:—

"Well, you must do as you please. I can't make you behave like a sensible woman, if you will not; but I warn you, that your disease is far advanced, and that I would not, nor could not, answer for your life another day."

"Be it so," said the woman, mournfully; "then I shall be all the sooner out of my misery."

"Yes, and leave your child to starve!" retorted the doctor, still more provoked; "or else to go to the workhouse."

"God's will be done!" answered she, submissively. "I cannot help it."

"Yes, you can!" said Mr. Jones. "Why do you not tell me at once the name of your deceiver?"

"He never deceived me," returned the

woman, proudly, while her dark eyes flashed with inward light. "Do you think," added she, with startling energy, "that if I had not loved him better than life itself I would ever have been his?"

"Then if you loved him so much, doubtless he is worth something to have won the love of such a being as you must have been," said Mr. Jones, his voice softening with involuntary respect; for, lost and fallen as she was, there was, spite of all, a purity of manner and language that struck him forcibly.

"Listen," said the woman, earnestly. "I will tell you as much as I can, and then blame him if thou wilt. Six months ago he came to say that he must take the child away from me, but I would not—could not—hear of it; so at last he consented, that if I would be satisfied with a sum of money, and go away quietly, and give him a solemn promise never to reveal his real name, the child should be mine without reserve. I gave the required promise, but fearing he might return and still deprive me of my child, I never waited for the money, but fled; and now I neither know where he is nor where to write to him." As she finished her speech she

sank back upon her pillow, and closed her eyes.

Mr. Jones felt that she was speaking the truth, and that it was useless urging her any further upon the subject. He saw, too, that it was a hopeless case, and one that must soon come to a close, for the dark tokens of the grave were already stamped upon her pale and wasted countenance.

Under these circumstances, it was useless harassing the poor thing with any more questions; so, recalling Violet, he left with her the necessary instructions, and went off to perform his ill-paid mission of healing and assuaging woe in another quarter.

It was about a week after this, that one morning, while he was standing in his surgery conversing with a friend, a very small tap was heard at the door.

"Come in!" cried he, loudly; and the next minute the poorly clad but light figure of Violet presented itself.

"Well," said the doctor, kindly, "how is your mother?"

The child lifted her head; and her face, which had been partially concealed by her bonnet, was exposed to view. Mr. Jones's

heart stood still as he read in her swollen eyes and wasted cheeks the answer to his inquiry. Nevertheless the child struggled to speak.

"Mamma is very ill, and Mrs. Wilby (the mistress of the house) has sent me for you. I cannot stay, but will you come and see her this morning?"

"I will go with you," said the doctor, a pang of remorse seizing upon his kind heart for not having called lately, and contrasting inwardly his own two handsome boys with this poor little half-starved thing.

"Martelli," pursued he, as he hastily changed his coat, Violet eyeing him all the while with the most supreme indifference, only intent to get away, "Martelli, this is the little singing-bird I told you of."

The child dropped her long lashes over her eyes as the gentleman, a man apparently advanced in life, looked fixedly at her. Then turning abruptly to Mr. Jones, he said, in a low tone:—

"She is the image of my lost Ada. Foreign, is she not?"

"I suspect the mother is a Quadroon," answered the doctor, in the same low tone.

"And dying, did you not tell me?" interrogated the signor.

Mr. Jones put his finger to his lips, and only nodded; for he saw that Violet heard the last question.

"Should she die," said his friend, in an almost inaudible voice, "and no one claim that child, let me know."

"I will," said the doctor, emphatically; and, shaking his friend warmly by the hand, he opened the surgery door, and followed the child into the street.

Not a word passed between them during their short walk. Mr. Jones lived in one of the handsome, old-fashioned, red-brick houses which the pedestrian every now and then stumbles upon in that neighbourhood; but it was within a stone's throw of misery, disease, and death.

When they reached the house, the child turned round and said, in her usual formal manner:—

"Please let me go up first and tell mamma that you are here."

The doctor assented, and after a minute or so she came down and invited him to walk up, saying, as she preceded him up-stairs:—

"Mamma is asleep. I am so glad; for she did not sleep all last night, nor the night before."

Mr. Jones answered not, but walked into the room, and straight up to the bed, by the side of which stood the mistress of the house, a decent, respectable-looking woman. She curtsied as he entered, and said softly:—

"Poor thing, she has had a very uneasy night. I was up nearly all the time, and so was that poor little child. I thought this morning, sir, as she did not seem to get better, that I would send for you."

Mr. Jones did not heed what was said to him. He was looking at the poor patient, who lay somewhat exposed to the light, and the blue tint of the lips, the discoloured hue of the lifeless hand as it lay on the coverlet, the sunken closed eyes, the heavy, uneasy breathing, told him that except, perhaps, at the last moment, when the parting soul throws a momentary brilliancy over the earthly temple that once shrined all its hopes and fears,—that soul was, even now, passing away into eternity.

"Mamma is asleep, is she not?" said Violet, who, with the quick, apprehensive

faculty of love, had noted the peculiarity of his look on entering the room.

But Mr. Jones did not answer her. He turned to the mistress of the house and said, hastily:—

"How long has she been in this state?"

"Some little time, sir," said the woman, respectfully. "She was very bad this morning —turned all blue like, as you see; and I think her mind slightly wandered, for she caught her child in her arms, and raved about some one of the name of Eustace,—the father's name, no doubt," added Mrs. Wilby, significantly. "Then the fit went off, and she grew better, and expressed a wish for a little tea; but she could not swallow it when I made it, so when she fell into this sound sleep I sent the child for you."

"Has she spoken since?"

"Not a word, sir; I don't think she has even moved!

"Have you any brandy in the house?"

"None, sir," returned the woman, but with that generosity of spirit which is so essentially found among the poor at such moments, she added, quickly, "But I can get you some in a minute."

"Do so," said the doctor; and putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, he drew forth a shilling and gave it to her.

Mrs. Wilby was as good as her word; in almost less than a minute she returned with brandy, a glass, and hot water: all borrowed from the public-house, for a poor soul who, as she phrased it, she much feared was dying.

Mr. Jones did not speak during her absence. He turned the dying woman more round to the light, and put a pillow under her, to partially raise her up. She uttered no word nor sound, and her hands fell dead upon the coverlet. Violet stood by and watched him, but she spoke not. Some unknown sense of terror had frozen up her young blood, and deprived her of utterance.

Mr. Jones seized upon the brandy the moment it appeared, and pouring it out in a glass, tried to open the lips of the sinking woman, and pour some down her throat; but he could not succeed: her teeth were tightly set.

He moistened them, though, vigorously; then putting the brandy back into the landlady's hands, he shook his patient slightly, and said in a loud voice:—

"How are you, to-day, Mrs. Newton? Mrs. Newton! Mrs. Newton! Awake! do you not hear me?"

No! she did not hear him—never would hear mortal voice again! Till the last day, when we shall all stand before the presence of God, those ears were closed.

"Oh! don't, please!" whispered Violet, imploringly. "Please let mamma sleep a little longer. You don't know, sir, how she has longed for sleep. She will wake up presently."

"She will, indeed!" said Mr. Jones, turning to the woman, whose looks answered his own; "but it will be in heaven!"

"Is she so far gone?" whispered the poor woman, compassionately. "Poor thing!—poor—poor little child!"

"Violet," said Mr. Jones, gently, "I want to say something to your mamma, see if you can awake her. She will have plenty of sleep presently."

Violet obeyed, and clambering up on the bed she put her arms round her mother's neck, and said, fondly:—

"Mamma, dear mamma, do you not hear me? It is I—Violet, your own Violet, that speaks to you! Oh, mamma!" she cried,

noticing no change in her mother's countenance, no awakening, no recognition, and felt her cold clammy hands,—"Oh, mamma, please speak to me! Speak one word! You frighten me!"

"It is of no use," said Mr. Jones, laying the poor head reverently down; and drawing the scanty curtains round the bed, he took the now terrified, sobbing child in his arms, and said, tenderly, "Listen to me, Violet; you must be a good girl, and not cry. That will only frighten your poor mamma, and tease her if she awakes and finds you unhappy. And if it is God's will to take her," pursued he, more gravely, his own eyes feeling wondrously dim, "remember, my child, that He who is above all will provide for you, for He is the God of the fatherless and the widow."

The child wiped her eyes, and looking up in his face with a sorrowful earnestness that made his heart ache, said, simply:—

"I know what you mean; my dear mamma is dying—about to die! She told me she should die, and that I must pray to God, for He would be both father and mother to me when she was gone."

"Exactly so," said the doctor, fervently; struck at the strong sense of piety the poor, frail, erring being before him, spite of her sins, must have possessed, thus to have so early impressed upon her child such a deep reliance upon the goodness of her Maker. "Exactly so, my child; but I must go now, for I have persons 'sick unto death' to visit, and little children like you, who are waiting for me to do all I can to save their parents."

"Go, then," said Violet, eagerly; "I will be very good, and do just what you have told me." And as an earnest of her obedience she left off crying.

Mr. Jones's heart was sorely touched. He was a widower, but, as I have said, he had two boys, one about Violet's own age, and the sight of her childish loneliness struck a tender chord in his breast.

But he had no time to spare. He was the Union Doctor, and, as he truly told Violet, "many children awaited his advent to save their parents, and many a fond mother hung upon his looks and words in anxious hope that he would save some darling's life." So giving a few directions to Mrs. Wilby, and

telling Violet that he would return soon, he took his leave.

That night, the poor, distressed, unhappy spirit went home, and was at rest, and that day week the frail body, which had once been so flushed with youth and beauty, and so flattered and adored while that beauty lasted, was consigned to a pauper's burial-ground, and the kind-hearted doctor took the friendless orphan home to his own house, in obedience to the promise he had made to his friend the Signor Martelli.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIGNS OF A STORM.

"I DON'T well know what to make of Millicent," said Mrs. Morley, one evening, when, all the junior branches being safe in bed, she and her husband were enjoying a snug chat by the dining-room fire.

"Make of Milly!" returned Mr. Morley, opening his good, honest eyes, very wide. "Why, what is there to make of her? She is very happy, and very well; what more would you have?"

"Oh, nothing!" returned his better half, unwilling to own to her spouse the secret cause of her discontent. "Only I think Milly is altered; we see so little of her now."

"If that is all, my dear Catherine," said Mr. Morley, gravely, "there is nothing to surprise you in that. Millicent has married a

man of large fortune, entirely removed out of our set, and of course her time must be much taken up."

"Of course it is," answered his wife, shortly; "but that need not prevent Millicent from coming to see her own mother."

"Coming to see her own mother!" ejaculated Mr. Morley, still more astonished than before. "Why, Millicent and her husband dined here last Sunday."

"I know they did," returned Mrs. Morley, still more shortly, "and we dined at their house the Sunday before. But on Thursday night, when Hannah went with a message to Brook Street, Davis told her that on Tuesday they had a dinner-party, with a host of lords and baronets at table, and that it was the grandest party they had given yet; and I think," pursued she, with some dignity, "that if Millicent could invite that little flighty, flirting Mrs. Vere, she might have asked her own father and mother."

Mr. Morley, who really was a gentleman, saw the truth of the case in a moment. He had long suspected that Eustace Neville, in marrying the beautiful Millicent Morley, had not the slightest intention of including her

relations in the compact; and that, beyond the usual intercourse of families connected by such ties, he would do his utmost to wean her from Guildford Street and its locality; and as far as he, Mr. Morley, was personally concerned, he did not care the least about it. His son-in-law lived in quite a different circle from that in which he had been in the habit of moving, and it would considerably have disconcerted him had he been forced to make his appearance at so formidable a dinner-party as one that contained such an unlimited supply of lords and baronets. It was, therefore, with perfect sincerity that he answered the irate Mrs. Morley:—

"Lords and baronets were there! Well, my dear, I think, instead of grumbling, we ought to be very thankful to Millicent for having spared us the trouble and bore of such a party. I, for one, should not have known what to say to such fashionable personages."

"Nonsense, Mr. Morley!" said his wife. "You would have known very well what to say, and so should I: and I shall just let Millicent know that I don't think she has behaved at all well, in excluding her father and mother in that way."

"But, after all, it may not be Millicent's fault. You forget," said Mr. Morley, jocosely, "that when a woman is married she must obey her husband."

"Obey a fiddlestick!" returned Mrs. Morley, angrily. "Just as if she could not manage her husband well enough to ask whom she likes to her dinner-table; and that, too, the first year of their marriage! No, no, Mr. Morley, I am not so green as to believe that."

"Well, my dear," returned her husband, good-humouredly, "I never suspected you of being green, and only hope you won't turn yellow; and as to being a fiddlestick, I am well content to be anything you please. But this I do say in defence of poor Milly," and here his bantering tone ceased, and his voice became very grave, "that she has married a man quite out of her own sphere, with thousands where we have hundreds, and that if that man ends by isolating and estranging her from her family it is nothing more than we might have expected. If we had wished to retain our child, we should have married her to a man in our own class. Such a man as Norman, for instance."

"I wish we had," responded Mrs. Morley, more exasperated than ever at the way in which her husband so plainly demonstrated that Millicent's behaviour was only such as they had reason to expect.

"Amen!" returned Mr. Morley, laconically, and an old friend coming in at that moment to play a sociable rubber, the subject was dropped.

But Mrs. Morley was quite right in declaring that Millicent was altered—not in heart, but in manner. She had now been married above six months, and by degrees had settled her household, and entered into the spirit of her new life with great vivacity. On the subject of the obnoxious Mrs. Vere she had met her husband half-way. He did not like her family—she did not like "the friend of his youth," as he always pathetically styled Mrs. Vere, so they came to a compromise. He was to treat her relations with respect, if not love; and she, in return, was to do her best towards overcoming her dislike to her husband's more than sister.

To effect this, however, was no easy matter. First, she had to manage the Guildford Street ceremonials, so as not to wound (and Millicent

would have died, ere she willingly inflicted a pang upon either father or mother,) their parental pride. Then she had to control and keep in proper subjection the wilful, untamed spirits of her brothers and sisters; and lastly, the worst trial of all, to comport herself graciously to Mrs. Vere.

But, disagreeable as the task was, she managed to get over it better and more easily than that of tranquillising and comforting the wounded vanity of her honest, good-natured, but ignorant mother. Whether Mrs. Vere, finding from practical experience that Millicent was not the easily-led school-girl she took her for, or whether Mr. Eustace Neville contrived to infuse into the mind of his passionate little friend, that if she did not behave with discretion she would come to grief, certain it is, that she set herself seriously to work to please the young and innocent Millicent; and as she was really a very fascinating woman, being highly accomplished, and, moreover, had mixed all her life in good society, she contrived, in part at least, to lessen the dislike Millicent had conceived against her, and they became in the end tolerably good friends.

Perhaps with Millicent this was the more

natural, from the genuine pleasure she saw it gave her husband; and as she loved him dearly, and had not ceased, in spite of one or two tropical blasts, to think him all perfection, the delight of pleasing him fully compensated for any little restraint she put upon herself in enduring the society of a woman she had so indifferently liked as Mrs. Vere.

Eustace's feelings were complicated, and not easily defined. He had married Millicent because her extreme beauty had struck his impassioned imagination, and caught his wandering fancy. What her beauty began, her sweetness of disposition completed. His heart was touched. The one spark of divine feeling, which had hitherto lain dormant, was kindled in his breast. He loved Millicent—not as he had loved the thousand-and-one women who had, at different times, lodged in the Temple of Fancy which went by the brevet rank of "heart"—but he loved her from the very depths of his soul, and with all the strength of his stormy, tropical, ardent, impassioned nature.

But, unfortunately, he had been so long the idol of the worst sort of women that the love, even of such a woman as Millicent, was

not potent enough to purify, or keep him clear of temptation. He valued his wife; would have done much not to sink in her estimation—done, in fact, anything but renounce his follies and dismiss Mrs. Vere. Eustace's worst faults were his pride and excessive vanity, and she fed the one and flattered the other, while he, like many another man blinded by self-love, became the willing slave of a woman who, in her heart of hearts, hated and despised him. Yes, hated him! Mrs. Vere had passions as deep, as strong, as ardent as his own. She had given up all for him, sacrificed all for him; but yet was not naturally a vicious woman. She had loved him with all her heart and soul, but she had not succumbed to that love without many a bitter pang of self-reproach. She had not had principle sufficient to resist temptation when it came in her way; so she gave way to her passions, but was not hardened enough to glory in them.

Then, again, as he was a single man, she, like many another of her sex, had fed upon the vain hope that, so long as he remained unmarried, some happy chance might deprive her of a husband whom she detested, and unite her to the man whom at that time she so ardently loved.

This marriage with Millicent, therefore, destroying as it did all hope of her ever becoming his wife herself, changed her love into the intensest hate; and in the first paroxysm of rage and disappointed vanity she vowed vengeance against him, and not only him but against the woman who had thus dared to take him from her, and supplant her in his affections.

From all she had gathered from Eustace of the character and disposition of his intended wife, she deemed this would be a task of easy fulfilment, but her first introduction to Millicent speedily dissolved that dream, and she was forced to own, in bitter wrath and mortification, that Millicent with her beauty, her purity, her self-possession, was more than a match for her, with all her worldly knowledge and experience.

But though foiled she was not beaten, and though driven from the field twenty times in the day, she returned to the attack with renewed ardour. She tried flattery—Millicent was impervious; she tried sarcasm—Millicent was cold as ice; she tried raillery—Millicent could give her back as good as she sent; she tried concealed ridicule of the Guildford-Street household, but she instantly

found that she must desist, or beat a retreat: so, feeling discomfited and foiled, she at last determined to call in an ally, and on the principle that union is strength, see if she could not vanquish her foe by numbers.

We shall see how she carried out her projects.

But if Mrs. Morley fumed and fretted in her drawing-room in Guildford Street, and Mrs. Vere stormed and raved in hers in Connaught Terrace, there was also a third person who was sitting in judgment upon poor Millicent.

Great was the disappointment and vehement the indignation of Cherry, when the plans and views of her aristocratic brother-in-law began to unfold themselves. Was this to be the end of Millicent's grand marriage? Instead of sitting in state—giving up the school-room—being called "Miss Morley"—introduced into company—perhaps presented at Court—all this had dwindled into exchanging one or two insignificant visits, and alternately dining with each other on a Sunday. Much good was it being called "Miss Morley!"

But as there is a consolation in ventilating one's wrongs, Cherry abused Eustace roundly

to her sisters in the school-room, lavished on him her whole vocabulary of reproach, called him all the nasty disagreeable upstarts she could think of, and ended by hoping Millicent would at last show proper spirit, and make him behave as he ought to do.

Miss Andrews was secretly much amused at the discussions that daily took place after school-hours; and though, when they grew very outrageous in their remarks, she deemed it proper to interfere, she prudently thought it was better otherwise to let the incensed girl have her say out to her sisters, and allow the school-room to prove a safety-valve to her outraged feelings. Accordingly she contented herself with merely gently checking her, and reminding her that indulging in such censorious remarks was not likely to fit her to win Mr. Neville's notice, much less his esteem or affection. "You forget, Cherry," she would say, "that he looks upon you as a mere child at present, much too young to go into company; in the circle of life to which he belongs, young ladies are never seen at all till they come out. However much he might wish Millicent to introduce you at any future time, he would decidedly not deem it right to ask you now."

"That may be all very true, and very fine," returned Cherry, dolefully; "but even if Mr. Neville does think me too young to go to balls and parties, that's no reason why Millicent should not invite me to stay with her, and drive out in her nice carriage. I think it very unkind of her indeed."

Miss Andrews could hardly refrain from smiling at the matter-of-fact way in which Cherry expressed herself. It was evident that, however much she might lament the deprivation of her sister's society, her lamentations were not so much for her sake as for her own loss, in not participating in those advantages which that sister possessed.

"Well, my dear," answered Miss Andrews, quietly, "I do not think for the next two years it will signify much Mr. Neville's not inviting you to share in the gaieties of Brook Street; for after Christmas you are going to school."

"Going to school?" cried all the girls in a breath. "Oh, dear Miss Andrews, you are not going away, are you?"

"Yes, I am," returned she; "and your mamma has determined (very wisely, I think) to place you and Blanche at a finishing school, and have a nursery-governess for the little ones."

"But why are you going away?" repeated the whole party in a chorus, and staring at their governess as if they could not believe their senses.

A happy smile played over Miss Andrews's usually grave face, while a bright flush suffused her cheeks. She raised her head, and met Cherry's glance fixed full upon her. Their eyes met, and Cherry jumped up, exclaiming while she impetuously embraced her governess:—

"I know why you are going to leave! I see it in your face! You are going to be married! Is it not so?"

Miss Andrews did not speak, but she pressed the warm-hearted girl to her breast and kissed her. Blanche and her sisters were too much amazed to speak; but could their thoughts have found utterance they would have been anything but complimentary to Miss Andrews's juvenility, for they were rendered quite dumb at the idea of such an old maid as their governess getting a husband.

"And who is he?" at last exclaimed Cherry.

"Yes! who is he?" cried all the rest at once, quite relieved by being able to vent their surprise.

"No one that you have ever seen," returned Miss Andrews. "It is a Mr. Melville. I was engaged to him many years ago, but he only returned from India last month."

"And why did you not marry him when you were first engaged?" inquired Blanche. "Why did you wait all these long years?"

"Because," answered Miss Andrews, in a faltering tone, "my father met with a great reverse of fortune, and Frank Melville was only a cadet then; so I remained at home to help poor papa."

"How good of you!" cried Cherry, in an admiring voice. "And to think how often we have teased you! I am sure, if we had known that you were going to be married some day, we should have behaved much better."

"What a pity you did not possess such a valuable piece of information sooner!" observed Miss Andrews, drily. "It is too late now for me to profit by your kind intentions."

"And is Mr. Melville rich?" asked Blanche; "and shall you live in London?"

"Oh, I hope he is not rich!" cried Cherry, hastily; "that is," (correcting herself) "not rich like Mr. Neville."

Miss Andrews smiled at Cherry's frankness as she answered, "I am sorry, as you so much wish it, that Mr. Melville is not poor: on the contrary, he is very rich; not only having amassed a large fortune, but, by the death of a relation, having just come into possession of a beautiful place in Wales."

"Oh, dear!" cried Cherry and Blanche, sorrowfully. "I am sure we are very glad, and very sorry, too. We shouldn't have minded if you hadn't been going to marry so very, very grandly; but had lived in London, somewhere near us."

"Well, it cannot be helped, and so, to make up for your disappointment, which flatters me extremely, I promise you, you shall all be my bridemaids, and come one at a time and spend your holidays with me."

"Oh, that will be charming!" cried the girls, delightedly. "Oh, dear Miss Andrews, how good you are!"

"Yes, a great deal better than Mr. Neville," muttered Cherry, resentfully. "I am sure he would not ask us to come and spend our holidays with him."

"I wonder what we shall think of school?

I rather fancy I shall like it," observed Blanche.

"And so shall I," returned Cherry; "and I am sure I couldn't bear to stay at home after Miss Andrews goes. As to another governess, I should hate her—indeed I should."

"Come," said Miss Andrews; "you have discussed my plans long enough. It is time you went to your music. And as to hating a new governess, I hope you have too much sense to do any such thing. You forget you are setting a very bad example to your little sisters."

The girls took the hint very respectfully, for Miss Andrews was no longer to be considered a governess, but a lady, upon whose favour and affection a good deal of their future amusement might depend.

The wonderful news that Miss Andrews had just imparted to her pupils had been known some time by their mamma, and she had consulted her on the best method of finishing the education of the two elder girls; and it was because Miss Andrews felt sure they would not recognise a stranger's authority that she had strenuously urged their mother to send them to a good school.

Mrs. Morley spoke to her husband, and he, having a great reverence for Miss Andrews's judgment, willingly assented. So a school was looked out, and it now only wanted about a month to the time when Miss Andrews would become Mrs. Melville.

No one more sincerely rejoiced in Miss Andrews's good fortune than did Millicent. She went over to Guildford Street the moment she heard of it, on purpose to congratulate her old governess in person; and when fairly shut in with her, kissed and hugged her with all her old school-girl eagerness, and had the whole story of Frank Melville's attachment out from beginning to end. Then she began unburdening some of her own troubles.

"It is not my fault, indeed, dear Miss Andrews, that papa and mamma were not invited the other night; but Eustace would not hear of it; and unless I were to quarrel with him I must submit to his wishes."

"You are quite right to obey your husband, Milly," returned Miss Andrews, gently; "and God forbid I should counsel you to do otherwise, especially (and a faint smile played round her lips,) now that I am going so soon to take a solemn oath to love, honour, and

obey a husband myself. But, Millicent, remember no duty can justify your slighting your parents."

"You don't for a moment think I would do such a thing?" cried poor Millicent, almost ready to cry. "It was because I knew mamma would be vexed that I said nothing about the party; but, somehow, she has found it out."

"Such things are sure to be known, sooner or later. Another time, Millicent, I would tell my mother, if I were you. You cannot help the whims of your husband, and your parents had better think him unkind than you undutiful."

"I cannot bear my parents to blame my husband," said Millicent: "I would almost sooner they thought me in fault."

"Who is this Mrs. Vere your mother seems to dislike so much?" asked Miss Andrews, abruptly.

"I am sure I hardly know. Eustace told me, when I questioned him, that she was born in Barbadoes, and that he had known her all his life."

"Is her husband alive, or is she a widow?" rejoined Miss Andrews.

"Oh! she is not a widow. Mr. Vere is abroad, in Australia," replied Millicent, gravely, not choosing, even to her most valued friend, to betray her dislike of any person her husband honoured with his friendship.

"And you see a great deal of her, do you not?" pursued Miss Andrews.

"Yes: Eustace wishes it. He thinks I am too young to walk or drive about alone; and though he is only a sleeping partner in the firm, he goes every day to the city."

"I should have thought your mother would have been the most proper person to have driven out with you," observed Miss Andrews, drily.

Millicent made no answer. She was a dear, good, loving-hearted creature; but she was but a girl, with all a girl's fear and dread of ridicule; and though on great occasions she could display considerable firmness and self-command, still she was not up to the heroism of paying a round of fashionable visits in company with her respected parent.

But she did not say as much to Miss Andrews; she felt that it was a disagreeable subject, and one she tried to banish from her mind as soon as possible. For though she

would fain be spared introducing her mother to her fashionable acquaintances, she had not yet conquered her dislike to the chaperon her husband had provided for her. She could not thoroughly and honestly like Mrs. Vere, though now the latter was pleasant, chatty, and clever in the extreme, and decidedly deferential and anxious to please.

Millicent felt, with almost a remorseful feeling, that she was greatly indebted to her, and tried hard to like her in turn, but somehow she could not succeed. Just when her heart opened to admit Mrs. Vere as an inmate, some word or look struck her as insincere, and the portals of her stronghold closed instinctively.

Eustace was the most contented of the party. So long as an outward show of peace could be preserved he was satisfied. Heartily sick and tired of Mrs. Vere he was, and had been for some time; but he knew her violent temper, and dreaded lest she should unveil his character to his young and innocent wife. And with respect to that young wife, his feelings were of a strange and mixed character. Almost unknown to himself he loved her, not with

such love as he had been in the habit of feeling. Formerly his heart had been a sort of Blue Beard's chamber. Look into it when and how you would, each niche contained the skeleton of a female head.

But Millicent's gentleness and strong affection was effecting a marvellous alteration, slowly but surely doing its work. Truly thankful would he have been to have been quietly rid of Mrs. Vere; but he knew not how to accomplish it, and therefore he was fain content to keep her in a good humour, and leave it to chance and circumstance to eventually rid him of her.

There is no need to paint a man blacker than he is. I am not writing a novel portraying model patterns of virtue on the one hand and double-dyed villains on the other. I am simply telling a true story; and in the days of Virgil should probably, if he is to be believed, have told it to some mighty magnate, or haughty potentate, and got well paid for my pains.

Eustace Neville, then, faulty as he was in some respects, had nevertheless a kind and affectionate heart, and, though fickle

as a husband, was not a man of coarse or vulgar habits. Millicent had not to fear a revolt in her own household, produced by any undue preference displayed by her husband: on the contrary, he was a good, but stern master; and the general impression in the domestic synod was, that the less they pried into their master's concerns the better.

Therefore, if Millicent's maid had her own ideas on the subject of Mrs. Vere's intimacy with her master, she wisely kept them to herself, or confided them in strict confidence to Ward, Eustace's own man, to whom, in the few months of their acquaintance, she had contrived to lose her own heart. If she did think that once or twice, on occasionally entering the drawing-room, she had found Mr. Neville and Mrs. Vere in very earnest conversation, or, if her eyes did not deceive her, had seen them walking arm-in-arm down Oxford Street, she was much too prudent to say anything to her mistress on the subject.

Nor would Millicent have listened to her if she had. She had already discomfited one or two gossips of her acquaintance, who had charitably wished to enlighten her as to the crooked ways and backslidings of her husband

before marriage. Millicent would not hearken to them, and gently intimated that her doors would be closed against any one who dared to utter a disrespectful word of the husband of her choice.

This spirited conduct brought its own reward. Instead of being harassed by suspicious doubts, she preserved the most perfect confidence in her husband's rectitude, and if there were things that, with all her love, she could not shut her eyes to, she prudently determined not to dwell upon them; but make the best of the choice she had made.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MODEL PREACHER.

Mrs. Vere was decidedly the least contented of the three. She saw that her power was waning, her star setting in the darkest night. If Millicent persevered in not listening to one word in her husband's disfavour, how was she to undermine the love and confidence that was every day increasing between them?

Mrs. Vere was at her wit's end. She had originally determined to have all the glory and pleasurable sensations which the deed would entail of ruining the peace of mind of Millicent Morley, wholly and solely to herself; but, like the Great Duke of famous memory, when she found her foe unconquerable by a single power, she called in the aid of an ally. Now, among the many friends and acquaintances whose cards graced the or-molu card-dish upon

her table was one bearing the name of the "Rev. Nathaniel Barton." Not a romantic inscription, I must confess; nevertheless, his life had been one somewhat romantic in its details.

The Rev. Nathaniel Barton (or, as I ought more properly to say with the card, the Rev. N. Barton) was forty, or rather more, born of very respectable parents, who had early started him into life with very tolerable prospects. But tolerable prospects had not served to content the reverend divine. He was possessed of a spirit of ambition worthy of a Brutus; but as the days of forums and stabbing in the market-places are passed away, and he had the misfortune to flourish in this very plain, matter-of-fact, prosaic age, when such little transactions would be put down under the vulgar name of murder, the Reverend Nathaniel Barton had to turn to safer and more ignoble roads to preferment.

I shall pass by his school-days and college life, and content myself by saying that at the first he invariably contrived to go home on a visit during the holidays with the boys who had the richest and grandest parents, and at the latter he was equally famous for fastening

himself on those young men who, in vulgar parlance and unclerical phrase, recommended themselves to his notice by having handles to their names.

Through the interest of one of these, the son of a Hampshire baronet, he obtained his first curacy, in the village pertaining to the estate of his friend's father; and as Sir John Skelton was old, gouty, irritable, and cross, the advent of a handsome young curate produced feelings of unmixed satisfaction in the bosoms of the wife and daughter of the old baronet. To do the reverend gentleman justice, he was, even at forty-five, what many would call a good-looking man. Of the middle height, with a broad, expansive forehead; dark eyes, which fixed those he addressed, and compelled their attention; small, and, but for a certain insincere look, not a bad-shaped mouth; and a way of deferring to the judgment and opinions of those he conversed with, that made him an especial favourite with the fair sex.

If Report were to be believed—and though Report, nine times out of ten, is a fibbing jade, still she generally has some foundation for her endless strings of *canards*—these valuable

talents and accomplishments had stood him in good stead at Skelton Place.

Lady Skelton was many years younger than her gouty spouse, and, what was more, governed that spouse with a generalship that inspired all beholders with a proper respect for her talents; and all who visited at Skelton Place were not slow to discover that, whatever of favour or affection they wished to obtain at the hands of Sir John, must be obtained through my lady.

The sleek and aspiring curate was not behindhand in finding out this peculiarity, nor slow in profiting by the discovery; and, to make a long story short, the Reverend Nathaniel turned his introduction to Skelton Place and its fair mistress to such uncommonly good account, that before he had ruralized there three years he contrived to win the hand, and with it twenty thousand pounds, of one of the starchest old maids the sisterhood could boast of.

To be sure, there were some drawbacks to his good fortune. First, the Honourable Susan Calander squinted; or at least her enemies said so; numbered full twenty summers more than the bridegroom; and, altogether,

was anything but a pleasing or an amiable personage. But, as a set-off to these deficiencies, she was the daughter of a viscount; and such was the Reverend Nathaniel's adoration and worship of the "Peerage," that, to have his name inserted in that aristocratic and exclusive volume, he would, without hesitation, have made much greater sacrifices than merely marrying a squinting wife. Also, there was another little circumstance that reconciled him to sacrificing his highly-prized self at the altar of Hymen for the possession of the very plain Miss Calander. Rumour also had—just slightly, very slightly—begun to couple his name with that of his respected patroness in a manner not at all creditable to their reputations: and to prove to the world how very wicked and unjust Rumour was in this instance, he took the Honourable Susan to wife.

But Rumour this time was quite hardened. Not only did she obstinately keep to her first story, but hinted that Lady Skelton, for private ends of her own, had persuaded the luckless Miss Calander into the marriage. Be that as it may, certainly, on his marriage, Mr. Barton left Skelton and settled in London; and as Mrs. Barton never presented her husband

with any pledges of affection, and his time, from the absence of any clerical duty, hung rather heavily on his hands, he determined on devoting himself to the fine arts, and thus push his way by degrees into the society he so much longed to be on terms with.

With this end in view he took a pretty little house in May-Fair, and, in an incredibly short space of time, as he was plausible, deferential, and persevering to a degree, he contrived to obtain a standing in a society especially devoted to science. To be sure, men of real talent called him a prosing fool, and unanimously voted him a bore; and fashionable men, to be classed with whom had been the great ambition of his life, shrugged their shoulders, and either laughed at his puny efforts to enter their magic circle, or overlooked him altogether.

But if he were not successful with the jealous bipeds of his own sex, he was more than repaid by the conquests he achieved over the other. He was pre-eminently successful with ladies of a certain age, especially unmarried ones, and, strange to say, though a Mrs. Barton sat at the head of his table, and did the honours of his house, some four or

five of his fair friends went to bed at night, and got up in the morning, each with the firm and fixed conviction that, whenever that very plain, disagreeable Mrs. Barton, chose to leave this world for a better, she, and she only, would reign in her stead.

The Rev. Nathaniel turned this fondness on the part of the sisterhood for their neighbours' goods to excellent account. He had set his mind, not upon being a great man, nor a clever man—a good man was much too insignificant a prize for his ambition—but upon being a fashionable man; to shine in fashionable society; to stand in the doorways, and be crushed on the staircases of fashionable parties and extra-select réunions; to help embellish with his clerkly presence the numberless fêtes and breakfasts which, during the season, are of daily occurrence; and, in fact, like the travelled monkey that had seen the world, to be able to astonish his less fortunate relations with his extensive acquaintance with the "Peerage."

For of course, like all tuft-hunters, when among his own people he liked to be king of his company, and to assemble his relations, down to his remotest cousins, around him on one of Mrs. Barton's reception-nights, and

favour them with a glimpse of any of his titled friends that might happen to grace his rooms, filled his empty head and puerile heart with delight; and could he contrive to turn the conversation upon the concert last night at Swandown House, and ask everybody in succession if they were going to the Duchess of Rawlington's ball to-morrow, or the great Miss Child Hoare's breakfast the day after, to each of which he had been duly invited, was the summit of his ambition.

After all, the indulgence of such a taste, though unworthy of anything in the shape of man, was not a particularly sinful pursuit, had he not taken to such a degrading line of conduct to compass his ends. For, finding all attentions paid to his own sex useless, he turned the whole of his thoughts to accomplishing his purposes through the agency of the other; and so skilfully did he go to work, that, while men occasionally wondered how that "parson-fellow, Barton," got here, and went there, not one guessed or fathomed his secret.

This was owing to the tact he displayed in selecting women past their *première jeunesse* as the objects of his devotion,—women of good (nay high) standing in society,

but whom the exceeding bad taste of his own sex had left to wither on the virgin stem.

What the nature was of his peculiar attentions to each lady in particular, it would be both imprudent and injudicious to unfold; enough for me to declare, that his wishes and aspirations met with complete success.

If he wanted an especial invitation to any particular reigning star, he had only to turn over his list of fair devotees, and the object of his ambition was speedily accomplished. If Miss Berkeley Wilson could not do it, why, Miss Leslie could; if she could not, then the great, the invincible Miss Child Hoare gave him a pass: in truth, like a popular member, whom men carry on their shoulders into Parliament, the ladies triumphantly bore him into the very heart of aristocratic society.

With this man Mrs. Vere was on intimate terms of friendship; that is, if the compact between persons of bad principles can be called such. She was not one of his particulars, having known him long before his admission into fashionable life, and since then she had done him many little useful and goodnatured turns, playing propriety whenever called upon, always being the "dear friend" who would

chaperon Miss Berkeley Wilson, or Miss Anybody else, if father or brother inquired who they were going with, to any country party or picnic; ready at a moment's notice to go to Chiswick, and delightfully lose her party when there, and not be found again till night-fall, when she would turn up at the Lodge patiently awaiting their arrival. So Mrs. Vere, thinking she had done so many good turns for him, determined he should now do one for her.

She resolved to call in his aid to assist her in subjugating Millicent, and accordingly wrote him a little note; and, obediently to her commands, the reverend divine made his appearance.

They greeted each other with friendly warmth; and after Mr. Barton had taken up his stand at the corner of the chimneypiece, his head resting gracefully upon his hand, a favourite attitude of his, and one he was never tired of assuming, Mrs. Vere opened her budget.

"I am in a strait, Barton, and if you don't help me, I know not what I shall do."

"You may depend upon my doing my utmost to oblige you, my fair friend," returned the amiable divine in his softest tones, and

fixing his rat-like eyes upon her with an expression of intense interest.

"Come, Barton, none of that nonsense to me, I beg of you," returned Mrs. Vere, pettishly: "we have known each other too long for such stuff. I am not Miss Berkeley Wilson."

Thus admonished, her reverend visitor changed his tactics. The expression of his face entirely altered. He drew a chair, sat down, and said, in a plain, matter-of-fact voice:—

"Now, Alice, I am all attention; what is it you want? Out with it!"

"I will out with it," returned she, curtly. "It is not much, after all; only for you to make love to Mrs. Neville."

"Make love to Mrs. Neville! What, the wife of Mr. Neville, of Brook Street?" returned he; and as he spoke, Eustace, with a revolver in one hand and a horsewhip in the other, presented itself to his mental vision.

"Yes, the same," returned Mrs. Vere, shortly, not quite liking the expression of his face. "She is a very pretty woman, and I should think you would find the task very agreeable."

"Very pretty — agreed; and very agreeable also. But, my dear Alice, consider my cloth!"

"Consider your cloth?" returned she, sneeringly. "Did you consider that when you proposed to Miss Child Hoare? Come, Barton, play the hypocrite to whomsoever you like, but not to Alice Vere."

"There, there, Alice! there is no necessity for you to talk in that way. Of course I will help you! But, first, I must know why you wish me to run the risk of making love to another man's wife, and also what you will gain by it if I do?"

"The happiness of my whole life!" returned she, with a force and fervency that made him start, and inwardly wish his fair friend in the Red Sea. "Do only what I ask, and I am your born slave for life."

"And how do you propose for me to proceed?" answered he. "Recollect, I know very little of the Nevilles."

"Quite enough," returned she, "for a man of your varied talents to succeed. You are already on visiting terms in Brook Street; improve upon them; ingratiate yourself into her confidence — no man knows better how;

then slily undermine her faith in her husband —you can do that, in your clerical character; and under pretence of being shocked at seeing her united to so profligate a man as her husband, repeat all that I shall tell you."

"But you have not yet told the good that will accrue to you if I do this," returned he, a little impatiently, inwardly disliking the task imposed upon him: first, because he never interfered with married women, and secondly, because he did not at all relish poaching upon anything belonging to Mr. Eustace Neville.

"You ask to know why I bespeak your assistance," said Mrs. Vere, her nostrils dilating with scorn. "Methinks that question had as well been left alone. I have never asked you why or for what you have claimed my assistance on various occasions—and she laid great stress upon the latter word—nevertheless I will tell you. Know, then, that I have loved Eustace Neville with my whole heart and soul, and once he loved me. His wife stands between us; and though I love him no longer—nay, hate, detest him—I will remove her, or I will die! False, perjured wretch as he is, he shall learn what it is to win a heart, and, when tired of it, cast it off and break it. I will be revenged! Next

to love, revenge is the sweetest of all passions."

She remained motionless as the last words escaped her, and so did her auditor. At last she rose up, and approaching him, stood before him, and said, "Will you help me?"

Mr. Barton had paid but little attention to the beginning of her speech—the latter part of it decided him in a moment. Revenge! Yes! He looked in her demon-like eyes, and believed her. Without a murmur he answered, laconically, "I will!"

"Thanks!" she exclaimed, with relieved air. "I thought you would not fail me."

He would if he had dared, but he was in her power, and she was quite aware of it; and he knew, by experience, what a woman will do when her passions obtain the mastery over her reason. He had a tolerable amount of self-control, however, and carefully concealed his distaste of the task she imposed upon him.

So the conference that had begun rather stormily, ended smoothly enough, and after a full explanation of what he was to do they parted; she to prepare her victim for the fate in store for her, and he to digest the safest plan for compromising Millicent, or for outwitting his fair friend and ally Mrs. Vere!

CHAPTER X.

THE ORPHAN.

Mr. Jones had been out all day as usual, and it was past eight before he was comfortably ensconced, minus boots and great-coat, in his snug after-dinner easy-chair, with whisky, sugar, lemon, hot water, and all the ingredients proper for making whisky-toddy, on the table; his friend, the Signor Martelli, reposing comfortably opposite to him, and a rousing fire roaring up the ancient chimney. At a round table in the centre of the room were seated three children, busily engaged in the old and respectable game of "Beggar my Neighbour." Two of them were the fine rosy-cheeked sons of the doctor, the third was the poor little orphan, Violet Newton.

She looked paler and thinner than even in her days of penury and starvation with her

poor mother, and there was a compression about the lips that told of a world of unexpressed sorrow in her young heart. She was dressed in neat and respectable mourning, while her black shining hair was parted smoothly off her clear open forehead. Much of the unpleasantly proud expression of her features had been deadened by suffering, but there still lurked a look, in the depth of her searching eyes, which reminded the beholder that the fire was only smothered, not extinguished; and as she touched the gold chain which was twisted round her slender throat, necklet fashion, her brow would darken, as if the touch of it roused up unpleasant memories. Her two companions, however, paid her great attention, especially Evan, the elder, a fine, noble, dashing boy, who regarded her with looks of positive adoration.

"Are you tired, Violet?" cried he anxiously, noting that she paused for an instant, as if listening to the conversation that was going on between their elders at the fireplace.

"No!" she answered, hastily, and playing out a card as she spoke. "No; I like playing;" but again she stopped, for again she heard her own name mentioned.

"You have only played one card, Violet!" said the younger boy, rather impatiently. "Don't you see it is a king, and I want two more?"

Violet played the cards mechanically, and just as Percy screamed out, "Stop! what are you about? see, you have played a knave!—I must give you one;" Mr. Jones said, "Violet, come hither!"

The child got up and went eagerly towards him, the two boys, like humble pages, following in her rear. Mr. Jones then took the little orphan by the hand, and smoothing down her shining hair, said kindly:—

"Violet, I have something to say to you. How long have you been here?"

"I don't know!" returned the child simply, gazing up in his face with a half-curious, half-wondering expression. "A long time though."

"Good!" returned Mr. Jones. "But, Violet, you must not live this idle life. Now, tell me, what would you like to do?"

"To do?" said the child, gravely. "Stay here, if you will let me."

An amused smile broke over the faces of both gentlemen, but the Signor said nothing. Mr. Jones went on:—

"But if you stay here, Violet, you will never learn anything, nor be able to earn your living; and you know you must do something one of these days, for you have no relations to take care of you."

"Oh, yes, papa, she has!" cried Evan, eagerly. "Violet is to be my wife, and then you will be her papa, and Percy her brother."

"Thank you, my son," returned his father drily, "for my intended daughter, but even in that case she must fit herself for the post; also you may change your mind. So, Violet, I think the best thing that can be done will be for you to go to school."

Violet stood very still. With a precocious sense of the value of money far beyond her years, she was pondering in her young mind how her going to school was to be accomplished, but she could not solve the difficulty; and being unable to unravel the Gordian knot, she cut it, and asked abruptly, "If I go to school, who will pay for me?"

"Very sensible question, Violet," said Mr. Jones, "and deserves a plain answer. Now, listen to me, my child"—and the good doctor's voice dropped into a tone of solemn pity—"I am going to tell you a little tory."

"Many, many years ago, a gentleman came to this country all the way from Italy. He was a great singer, and all England flocked to hear him when he sang; and after a few years he amassed a large fortune, and thought of returning to his own country, and buying a grand estate, when a sad misfortune befell him. Mr. Jones paused to take breath, and to watch the effect his story produced. Violet, from the depths of her intense eyes, searched into his very soul. The two boys, especially Evan, listened with earnest attention.

"What is a misfortune?" inquired the young Percy, innocently.

"What happened to Violet a month ago?" inquired the doctor, interrogatively.

"She lost her mother," answered the two boys in a breath. "Poor Violet, don't cry!" said Evan, soothingly.

"Well, then," said their father, without noticing Violet's quivering lip and humid eyes, "that is what is termed a misfortune, and this gentleman had a double one; he lost both wife and child."

"What, both at once?" asked Violet, earnestly.

"His daughter died first, and then the mother," answered Mr. Jones.

"Poor gentleman!" sighed Violet. "How I pity him!" And the boys repeated after her, —"Poor gentleman!"

"Yes, he was a poor gentleman!" said the doctor, sadly: "but this was many years ago; and at last he got over his great affliction, and conquered his griefs, and became calm and resigned, never thinking it possible to love anything again. But a short time back he saw a little girl, who reminded him of his lost Eva; and the poor little girl has lost her mother, and become an orphan, and he is good enough to say that he would like to adopt her, and make her like his own child. And so, my darling," said the good doctor, pressing Violet to his breast, "will you like to be the Signor's little girl? If so, go and kiss him and thank him; for there he is."

"Dear me!" cried Evan, in amazement, and opening his blue eyes to their fullest extent. "Then it is Signor Martelli's history you have been telling us all this time!"

"Exactly so," returned his father, with philosophic calmness.

But Violet did not speak; wild thoughts

and fancies were chasing each other through her young brain. She did not more than half understand what the doctor meant by the Signor's adopting her, and she being his child. All she comprehended was, that Signor Martelli, like herself, had no relations, and that he wanted to have her for a little girl in place of the one he had lost. To this she felt not the slightest objection, for she had known the Signor now above a month, and he always treated her with marked kindness; making her sing to him, and calling her the Prima Donna, and prognosticating that her voice would be her fortune. All these things passed through her mind in rapid review, and with them the cheering sensation that she would be once more a young lady. Thus the one dream of her childish existence would be fulfilled—the one thing that her poor dead-and-gone mother had impressed upon her, as worth living for. This decided her: she did not lose time; but, turning to the doctor, said promptly:—

"I shall like to be the Signor's little girl very much."

"And my wife also, Violet! You won't forget that?" put in Evan, anxiously.

"Oh, no!" she said, with perfect simplicity. "I mean to be your wife; and then, dear Dr. Jones"—and she threw her arms suddenly round his neck—"will be my papa. And I will be such a good daughter; make his tea, and toast his muffins, and nurse him when he is sick."

"I dare say, Violet, you will turn out a very nice little wife to any one who is lucky enough to get you," returned the doctor, evasively. "But now kiss the Signor, and say how much obliged you are to him for adopting you."

Violet did as she was bid; and, timidly approaching the Signor, put up her young face to be kissed, and said calmly:—

"Thank you, sir, for being so good as to take me for your little girl, and making me a young lady."

The old pride at the bottom! Astonishing what a hold it had taken of her young heart!

The Signor did not notice the latter part of her speech, but taking her solemnly in his arms said, in a broken voice:—

"O God, who seest me adopt this friendless orphan, grant that I may do a father's part by her!"

"Amen!" echoed the good doctor, gently. Then, after a moment's pause, he added: "No fear, my good friend, of your doing your duty."

"Thank you," said the Signor, affectionately; but Violet interrupted him with sudden energy.

"You will let me speak to my own papa, if ever I see him? I have got, you know, a dear papa somewhere; and some day he may come back for me, and then I must go."

"God forbid, my child, that I should wish to prevent your speaking to your own father, or even going with him if he claims you!" And here a look passed between the Signor and the doctor, as much as to say—"No fear of that happening."

"Thank you, sir," said Violet, quietly. "I am very much obliged to you, for I was so fond of dear papa, and am still, though poor mamma told me not to love him, and said he left us to starve! But I cannot help loving him—indeed I cannot," added the child, timidly, as if she were saying something she ought not.

"There is no reason why you should not continue to love him," remarked the doctor,

gravely. "Your poor mother was very ill, and when persons are sick they say many things they don't mean."

"And now," said the Signor, interrupting him, "when shall I come and fetch you away? Will you go with me to-morrow?"

Violet was going to say, "Yes," when she caught Evan's reproachful eyes fixed upon her, and her conscience smote her for wishing to go away. She was very fond of Evan, in her childish way; he had been so careful, so attentive to her: but she was not of a demonstrative nature, and her mother had instilled into her a sort of Cain-like way of not caring for any one in particular; and now, after all the kindness shown her, from the doctor's kind old sister down to the young Percy, she felt no sorrow at leaving them, but would willingly have walked off with the Signor that very night.

Nevertheless, she liked Evan, after a fashion of her own, and his reproachful glance arrested the ready assent that trembled on her lips, and, correcting herself, she said:—

"I shall like to go whenever you please, sir; but I am very sorry to leave Doctor Jones."

"And are not you sorry to leave me?" said Evan, sorrowfully.

"And me, also?" chimed in Percy.

"Oh, yes!" cried she, bursting into tears; a touch of real nature flooding her breast. "Oh, yes! I am very sorry to go, I love you all so much."

"Poor girl!" cried the Signor, compassionately, caressing her as he spoke. "Poor little child! Never cry, my darling; you will often see your old playfellows. And as to you, boys, you should set a better example"—they were both sobbing in sympathy. "What do you cry for? I am not going to run away with Violet."

"The best thing you can all do is to go to bed," cried the doctor: "that will do you young people the most good." And looking at his sister, that respectable person took the hint, and carried them off, leaving him and his friend to continue their chat in quiet; which they did, and settled that the two boys were to be sent off to school as early as possible the next morning, and then he should pack Violet and her simple wardrobe into a hired brougham, and bring her and deliver her formally into the Signor's charge.

This was accordingly done, and after a most watery leave-taking with her avowed adorers, Miss Violet, in her best black frock, hat, and cloak, and her small stock of clothes packed into a neat school-box, all of which had been provided at the Signor's expense, was handed into the carriage, and the doctor following, they soon found themselves in Weymouth Street, Portland Place, where the Signor rented a very handsome house.

He was, of course, at home to receive them; and Violet, who had quite dried up the tears shed at parting with her playmates, surveyed with equal surprise and pleasure the glories of her new home—not the least consisting in the sight of a superb piano-forte, which graced the drawing-room. And well might she look wonderingly around her, for the Signor, like all his countrymen, who can afford it, delighted in rich furniture and splendid ornaments; and Violet, who had never even dreamed of, much less seen such a room, gazed in ecstasy at the damask curtains, the satin-wood couches, the buhl cabinets filled with matchless china, the glasses, mirrors, pictures, screens, statues, and mu-

sical instruments, and thought she must be in fairyland.

The Signor noticed her admiring looks with inward satisfaction. He kissed her affectionately, and seeing her eyes wander to the instrument led her up to it, saying,—

"Let Doctor Jones hear you try the piano! Sing me the Hymn to the Virgin."

The child complied, and soon the full though untaught melody of her exquisite voice filled the room. Unheeding aught around her, she sang from the first note to the last, when, raising her eyes, she found another had been added to the listeners; an elderly woman in black was looking at her with intense interest.

"Well, Paulina, did I tell you right?" cried the Signor, to the old domestic, "Is she not the living image of my lost child?"

"Holy Virgin, protect us!" cried the old woman, crossing herself; "but it is as though the grave had given up its dead! I could fancy that the Signora was once more come to life again."

The Signor sighed heavily, and then turning to the astonished child he said, "That is Paulina, the faithful nurse of my dear little

dead Eva. You must be very obedient, and mind what she says, Violet; she will love you for your resemblance to her lost darling."

"And if I am good you will love me for myself, won't you?" cried Violet, getting up from the instrument and going towards the nurse.

"Yes, my little dear," cried the old Paulina, pleased with the child's speech, and evident wish to make friends. "I am sure I shall like you very much. But, the saints be praised, what a likeness!"

"It is, indeed," rejoined the Signor. "But now, Violet, I want to speak to your papa Jones alone; so kiss him, and bid him good-by, and go with Paulina. She will take and show you the room you are to have, and help unpack your things for you; for to-night I have a dinner-party, and you must come in at dessert-time, and be introduced to my friends as my new daughter."

Violet did as she was bid; and again Nature asserted her rights, and broke through the icy chains in which she had been nurtured. She clung to the doctor, and kissed him again and again, sending her love to the boys every second. Even he was touched,

though he said, on putting her out of his arms, "There—there—that's enough kissing for one day. Run áway, there's a good girl, and don't keep Paulina waiting." Still, as he told the Signor, it was impossible not to feel a little touched by the child's innocent expressions of love. But he was too matter-of-fact a person to let such thoughts trouble him long, and he drove off, very well satisfied in his own mind in having secured so excellent a home for the little orphan, and not sorry, also, at removing such a nameless, yet attractive intruder, out of the way of his own boys.

And Violet pattern'd her betters; and towards the close of the day, when comfortably seated in the back study at tea, listening with open ears to Paulina's account of all the raptures that awaited her in the new character of the Signor's adopted daughter—the handsome frocks she would wear; the children's parties she would go to; the operas and the theatres she would see; her little vain heart swelled with delight, and she felt perfectly satisfied with the fate in store for her, and with the happy elasticity of youth forgot, or but faintly remembered, the sorrows she

had undergone, and the woes she had passed through, and retaining only a mournful memory of the past, the principal point of which was summed up, in her young mind, in the loss of her dear and beloved mother.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW MR. BARTON PERFORMED HIS PROMISE.

As it turned out, the Reverend Mr. Barton strictly fulfilled the promise he had made to Mrs. Vere, his undetermined course of action being changed, not by any particular desire to oblige his fair friend and partner, but, for the first time in his life, the inestimable divine felt a wish on his own account to make himself agreeable to the beautiful Mrs. Neville, and not only exerted his energies, but threw his whole soul into the task he had undertaken.

He had noticed Millicent's rare grace and loveliness from the first moment of introduction, and, what interested him far more, the extremely good set in which she moved; and with his usual deep-sighted sagacity had revolved over several times in his own mind how far, and in what way, she might be made useful in giving him another lift towards

attaining a secure footing in that magic circle on the limits only of which he at present trod.

Mrs. Vere had done her duty from the first, and regularly introduced him to both Eustace and his wife. But Eustace did not take kindly to him. He had an irreverent dislike to the cloth in general, and Mr. Barton he considered as one of its worst specimens; in fact, as he told Mrs. Vere, he thought him a confounded bore, and what she saw to like in such a prosy, toad-eating muff, was more than he could understand. To this Mrs. Vere laughingly assented, agreeing that he was a muff, but a good-natured muff on the whole; and if he had a vulgar prejudice for pushing his way into places where he was not wanted, or worse, like the gnat in Æsop's fables, overlooked, why, there was no particular crime in that; and, after all, every one had his failings.

Eustace could not deny the truth of this last assertion, seeing that he himself had the lion's share, and made no further opposition to the reverend gentleman being placed on Millicent's visiting list; accordingly Mr. Barton had another drawing-room wherein to practise his attitudes, and perhaps some day to subjugate its fair mistress by the force of his eloquence.

So at one dinner, and all their evening parties, Eustace had taken the two fat fingers of the Reverend Nathaniel, and given them a pump-handle shake; and in the streets and public thoroughfares they bowed and said, "How do you do?" and once they had met at the Botanical Gardens: when the divine being encumbered with the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and not being over-proud of her, speedily disappeared behind the trees.

But this sort of visiting did not justify the Reverend Mr. Barton in paying morning visits in Brook Street, and without that sort of free-and-easy intercourse he had little chance of carrying his schemes against Millicent's peace and happiness into effect. This he told Mrs. Vere. She listened, and said, promptly:—

"I am going with her to-morrow to see a collection of pictures in Pall Mall; be there at four precisely, and I will manage all the rest."

The Reverend Mr. Barton promised obedience; and the next day, in a superlative suit of black, with eye-glass and lavender gloves, by the merest chance in the world, he had the pleasure of meeting the two ladies just as they alighted from their carriage.

Of course he attended them into the gallery,

and of course he listened with profound deference to every word Millicent uttered. But somehow she was out of spirits, or sadly deficient in taste, for all his graceful poses were thrown away upon her, and, like her husband, she thought him a decided bore.

However, she was much too Christian-like and well-bred to let her feelings be seen; and as when they came out it was raining hard she could do no less, when Mrs. Vere asked as a favour if she would take Mr. Barton as far as Brook Street, than express her readiness to set him home.

But this Mr. Barton would not hear of—besides which, he wanted a book he had left at Mrs. Vere's; so, if Millicent would take him along with them as far as her house, he could go such a short distance as Mrs. Vere's on foot.

Millicent immediately offered the use of the carriage to convey him to Mrs. Vere's, and afterwards home; and though, on any other occasion, he would have been charmed to roll up to his house in Bolton Row in such an elegant turn-out as Millicent's, he knew his cue too well not to gracefully decline the offer.

When they arrived in Brook Street, for-

tune favoured him. It poured in torrents, and his religious scruples came to his aid. He could not answer it to his conscience to allow the coachman and footman, or even the quadrupeds, to remain out in such a drenching shower; and therefore, seeing the ladies into the hall, he lifted his hat, preparatory to wishing them good morning.

But Millicent could not let him walk away in such a deluge as was coming down at that instant; so, as he would not make use of her carriage, she was fain obliged to ask him into the house until the rain had abated.

This offer he gratefully accepted; and during the half hour that he stayed did his best to make himself agreeable to his fair young hostess; and if he did not succeed as well as he wished, he succeeded so far as to obtain permission to call again; and bring an ancient book, which Millicent was rather curious to read, and which he had undertaken to procure from some scientific library.

This he accordingly did; and step by step he cautiously contrived to gain a footing in the house; and, under one pretence or another, came regularly, and attudinised before

Millicent, till at last she entertained serious doubts of his sanity, and began to think it would be advisable, perhaps, to say "not at home" to such an oddity, as one day he might prove an alarming visitor.

Doubtless, that would have been the end of the Rev. Mr. Barton's morning calls, had not fate and circumstances decreed otherwise.

Millicent was very near her confinement; and, as usual in such cases, in somewhat low and uncertain spirits; added to which, being young, rich, and beautiful, the fashionable physician who attended her, seeing no female friends with her, spoke to Eustace, and told him she must on no account be left alone. Eustace, whose passionate love for his wife increased daily, and who was looking forward to the advent of the young stranger with the most intense delight, immediately took the alarm, and insisted on installing Mrs. Vere as a companion for Millicent, and to be with her in her hour of trial. This plan suited him in other respects; for, by placing Mrs. Vere in his house, and treating her as his wife's bosom friend, he hoped to give contradiction to the many rumours which were beginning

to be rather more than whispered about concerning himself and her, and which he dreaded coming to his wife's ears.

It was not a bad stroke, though an unscrupulous one. Few even in these degenerate days—days in which vice and profligacy flourish more than in the worst times of ancient Rome—days in which we cannot take up a newspaper but we are thankful to lay it down; fearful lest our eyes be polluted and our hearts shocked by reading the atrocities and immoralities it contains: few, he thought, even in these days, would dare to speak ill of the woman who was the chosen friend of his wife.

Millicent did not like the scheme when her husband proposed it, but circumstances prevented her making the opposition which she would, had she been differently situated. Miss Andrews was now Mrs. Frank Melville; I myself was abroad; her sisters were at school; and, even had they been at home, were not the proper persons to be with her at such a moment. And her mother—her dear, kind, good mother, who would, she knew, sacrifice convenience and everything else to be near her darling Millicent—she hesitated to ask, on account of the bad feeling

that subsisted between Eustace and her good-hearted parent.

The truth of the matter was, that Mrs. Morley had never forgiven her exclusion from the famous dinner-party; and as, in her heart, she perfectly acquitted Millicent, her feelings towards Eustace became anything but pleasant; and as, like all ignorant persons, she was unable to control her tongue, she and her son-in-law often had wordy battles; so much indeed did they disagree, that Millicent dreaded what might happen should her mother and Eustace be domiciled together for a whole month, without her being by to smooth and temporise.

When her husband, therefore, proposed Mrs. Vere, she acquiesced, though she would have much preferred being quite alone. Still, as she had no good reason to offer against the plan, and as she felt Eustace would be very lonely the month she was up-stairs, she thought it better to appear to like what she did not know how to avoid.

But when the hour of trial really came, Nature asserted her own rights, and Millicent's first cry was for her mother, her dear, her darling mother! And so urgently and piteously

did she plead, that the doctor begged of Eustace to hasten off to his mother-in-law, and lose no time in bringing her to the bedside of her suffering child.

Eustace needed no second bidding. He tore off, and raced down to Guildford Street at railway speed, dragged the terrified Mrs. Morley out of her bed (it was five in the morning), and hardly giving her time to dress herself, thrust her into the carriage, and carried her back in triumph to Upper Brook Street. On their way she gathered that Millicent had been ill all night; that the nurse and Mrs. Vere were with her; and that Doctor Peyton, who had been immediately sent for, finding from Millicent's cries whom she wanted, had ordered Eustace to go directly for her. Mrs. Morley could have reminded her son-in-law, that if he had behaved properly she might have been in the house at that minute, and ready to comfort her daughter at an instant's notice; but she was too good-hearted to add to his evident anxiety and wretchedness: he looked already as if in the clutches of an avenging angel, and did not need anything to add to his miseries. The moment the carriage stopped, Thompson, Millicent's maid, came to the door. Her eyes

were red, and her face bore marks of violent emotion.

"Good God!" cried Eustace, hastily, "what is the matter? Speak!" and without waiting for an answer he rushed up-stairs.

"Is Mrs. Morley come with you?" anxiously inquired Doctor Peyton, who met him on the landing-place.

"Yes!" cried Eustace, holding by the banister-rail, for his agitation was so excessive he felt faint. "But how is Millicent?"

"Mrs. Neville is exactly what we might expect under the circumstances," returned Doctor Peyton, gravely. "But you must calm yourself, Mr. Neville, for she wishes to see you, and any undue excitement at this moment might prove fatal."

Doctor Peyton's professional gravity restored Eustace's self-possession; and introducing the doctor to Mrs. Morley, he followed him into the chamber of his sick wife.

Millicent was lying with her face buried in the pillows, as if to shut out the hateful presence of Mrs. Vere from her sight; but on the door opening she raised her head, and catching sight of her mother, sat up, and throwing her arms round her, sobbed on her breast.

Mrs. Morley comforted her daughter as only a mother can, and the doctor, having noticed, with the quickness peculiar to his profession, that the presence of Mrs. Vere was distasteful to his patient, now spoke his mind, which was, that the sooner Mr. Neville and Mrs. Vere left the room the better. Eustace was loth to go, and Millicent being equally loth for him to leave her, implored him to stay with all the fervour of deep and passionate love; but when the doctor, anxious to put an end to all this excitement, gently insinuated how much suffering she would impose upon him by insisting upon his presence, her unselfish spirit immediately yielded, and she said:—

"Go, dearest, go; it is better that you should go: it will be all over soon, and then —then—I shall be so happy."

A remorseful pang shot through Eustace's heart as he gazed on the beautiful creature before him, about to undergo such a torturing ordeal for his sake, and knew that he was bound, beyond hope of freeing himself, to the scowling little woman at his side.

At that moment, could he have obliterated his past life and begun the world afresh, who knows but that, finding by experience how

bitter are the wages of sin, he might have trodden the straight and narrow way which, we are told on unerring testimony, leads to eternal life!

But his reflections were cut short by the doctor, who turned both him and Mrs. Vere out of the room, and most unceremoniously closed the door behind them. On that day, before the sun sunk to rest, he had the satisfaction of knowing that Millicent was safely through her trial, and he the father of a fine boy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VISITOR.

THINGS progressed charmingly in Upper Brook Street for the next fortnight. Mrs. Morley did the honours up-stairs and Mrs. Vere down-stairs, and both were mutually pleased with their occupation, and far too busy to take much note of the other's proceedings. As for Millicent, she was too happy to turn her thoughts to any objects less exalted than her husband and wondrous baby; and Eustace paid her such unremitting attention; and, unlike most of his fellow-bipeds in that respect, was so madly charmed with, and fond of, the little, pink, soft, cosy-looking ball of flannel, that every morning was presented to his notice, that Millicent's days glided on in a sort of dreamy, delicious trance, from which, she fondly hoped, there would be no awakening.

But nothing in this world lasts for ever, and the first signs of clouds in the horizon began to show themselves, when, at the end of this blissful fortnight, Mrs. Morley, at her daughter's urgent entreaty, went down and graced the dinner-table with her presence.

Millicent herself was up, and on the sofa in her dressing-room; her recovery had been both rapid and satisfactory, and Mrs. Vere had noted, in the depths of her dark and wrathful soul, that she had risen from her bed of pain and come out of her perilous ordeal a thousand times more beautiful and enchanting than ever. Not only had Mrs. Vere noted this distressing point, but also, with a pang that served to rend her jealous heart asunder, that Eustace was fully cognisant of the fact, and seemed to regard his young and lovely wife, with her fortnight-old babe in her arms, with almost idolatrous worship.

The sight well-nigh maddened her beyond the bounds of reason. Nevertheless, she wavered not for a single instant in her determination of overthrowing the happiness of the woman whom she persisted in considering as having been born into the world expressly to

deprive her of the only being she had ever cared to love.

The first step towards the completion of her purpose was, she knew, to retain her footing in the house, but this was no easy matter. Millicent openly disliked her, Mrs. Morley no less so: spite of her pretty blandishing ways, which had all been brought to bear upon that lady, Mrs. Morley remained obdurate. She had not forgotten Mrs. Vere's supercilious treatment of her at their first meeting, and, added to the dislike then and there conceived, she had a motherly instinct that Mrs. Vere was no friend to her darling Millicent.

Mrs. Vere felt the difficulty of her position to its fullest extent; but, like the majority of her sex, she no sooner perceived it than she saw her way out of it, and having fully matured her plans she lost no time in carrying them into effect.

The first thing to be done was to win Eustace over to her side, and that could be accomplished only by a little judicious flattery. Like Achilles, he had a vulnerable point—his vanity. Not personal vanity—no man was freer from anything approaching petty dandy-

ism; but he was not proof against the pleasure of being loved; and though heartily tired of Alice, as he familiarly called her, still when, day after day, he found her at her post, ready and willing to administer to his comforts, he felt a sort of lazy liking, and self-gratulation in knowing that there was at least one person in the world who looked up to him with unbounded veneration.

Therefore, when one morning Mrs. Vere came, and with tears in her eyes declared that she should be forced to change her lodgings, for that her husband had failed in sending his accustomed remittance, and she was already very much in debt, his naturally kind heart was touched; he could not disguise from himself that he had injured her, and he eagerly sought to make reparation in the best way he could. He sought it the more eagerly, because for the last year he had tasted of such pure and unadulterated happiness, and knew but too well that that happiness was built upon the foundation of her woe. This thought was strong in his mind, and he said, eagerly:—

"Never mind that, Alice; don't let money matters distress you. You have only to say what you want, and I will draw a cheque."

"You are generosity itself!" murmured she, gazing, as if with suppressed adoration, into his face. "But I cannot take advantage of such goodness; indeed I cannot. You forget that you have a wife now, and a son (striving to force a smile). It is very different from old days, when I fancied I was dear to you."

"And so you are dear to me still," said he, good-naturedly; "and as to generosity, that's all stuff and nonsense: so bring me the pen and ink, and take the cheque like a good girl."

"Am I still dear to you?" whispered she, softly. "Oh!" and she dropped upon her knees before him, "if I am dear, grant me one favour."

"Yes, yes, I will grant you anything you like," cried he, in alarm; "only get up, Alice, and ask it like a reasonable being:" for the idea that his wife's maid, or, still worse, his mother-in-law, might surprise them in such a situation, was not pleasant.

She rose slowly, and, laying her hand upon his arm, said, in a husky tone of voice:—

"You know how I love you, and you know also that you have ceased to love me;

nay, don't deny it," (seeing he was about to speak), "it is but human nature after all. Millicent is young, fair, gloriously beautiful; I am —— well, no matter what: I am not Millicent, and that's enough; but I have a heart as warm as she has—a love as true, if not as legitimate. Spurn me not from you; let me find a shelter, for the short time I may have to live, under your roof; let me sun myself by the sight of you, hearing your voice only; let me be of use to you, devoting myself to your child: there can be no sin in doing that."

Eustace stood spell-bound with surprise. What, was this the fiery, passionate, ill-regulated, little Alice Vere! this woman with such lofty sentiments, such self-denying, such broken-hearted worship! He was quite taken aback, and a feeling of remorse shot through his frame as he looked upon her and felt how much of truth there was in what she uttered. But then, to promise that she should live with them was impossible: not that he had any objection; his morality, I grieve to say, was of the poorest description, and did not stand in the way; but Millicent, she would never consent. So he answered, somewhat hastily:—

"I am sorry, Alice, but I cannot comply

with your request; ask anything else, and I will grant it."

"If you won't grant one thing, you won't another," returned she, gloomily. "However, I will not be beholden to you, since you dislike me too much to have me in your sight."

"What confounded nonsense you talk!" cried he, angrily, his tropical blood firing up at the the persistency of her contradiction. "That's the worst of women!" muttered he. "One can never get them to listen to reason."

"I see nothing that I have done unreasonable," returned she, coldly. "I have asked you a favour, and you have refused it. Surely I am equally free to refuse your offer, as you to refuse my request?"

"Of course you are; but you should not have asked yours. You must be sure that Millicent will not consent."

"Oh, if you have to ask your wife's leave, that's another thing;" and her voice sounded slightly contemptuous. "I thought you were quite your own master."

"So I am," returned he, savagely, nettled by her sarcastic speech. "I thought you knew me well enough, Alice, to be sure that

I would have my own will, spite of man or fiend."

"I did think you the very essence of firmness. It was that resolute will which subdued mine. Think you," and her black eyes flashed with scorn, "that I would have given up all that woman holds dear; perilled my very soul here and hereafter; laid up for myself hours, days, nay, years of torture; but that I not only loved you, but bowed before the strength, the undying strength of your will?"

Her words, hot, fiery as burning lava, sunk deep into his soul. He could not resist them. He looked into her face, lighted as with a lamp, and contrasted her with Millicent. Millicent was all that his heart could wish, but she was cold. She never told him that he was omnipotent; never succumbed to his better judgment, like the glowing, animated being before him. He forgot that every action of Millicent's life was a daily homage, a never-ceasing self-sacrifice to his talents and judgment. But Millicent only acted, not talked. At that instant he forgot everything, save that he had won the love of this poor, crushed child of Eve—had injured and de-

stroyed her fair fame, wounded her peace of mind, and owed it to her, as a stern and sacred duty, to do everything in his power to soothe her broken spirit.

And after all, she didn't ask much; just to be permitted to live on and sun herself in the radiance of his presence. This was very gratifying to his self-love, if Millicent could but be brought to see it in an amiable light; and really, for some length of time, she would require female society. Her sisters were still at school; and had they not been so, Geraldine, the one most likely to be invited, was his pet aversion. He disliked her plain and brusque way of speaking her mind upon all occasions. Mrs. Morley was out of the question. Thank God, she could not be spared! And while he revolved these things rapidly over in his mind, he half-determined to accede to Mrs. Vere's proposition, and his voice softened as he answered:—

"Well, Alice, I will see about it; at any rate, for the present there is no need for you to think of moving. Millicent will not be able to come down yet for another week or so; and I don't know what I should do, left all by myself."

Like all his sex, in little things mindful only of his own comfort!

Mrs. Vere's heart beat with tumultuous joy, and her eyes literally danced with pleasure; but she was careful not to express by words what was passing in her mind. The first grand step was gained. It now remained but for her to guard against Millicent's destroying her plans by one fell word of opposition. She looked up timidly, and said:—

"Thank you, dearest! How I thank you in my heart of hearts, you will never know! Believe me, I will do my best to conquer the dislike Millicent entertains for me. God help me!" dropping her voice into a sorrowful intonation, "she has no need to begrudge me the little happiness left me in this world. She holds all in her grasp. She has taken you from me; deprived me of your love. It would be too hard to deprive me of even a sight of you."

Her words had the desired effect. Eustace was touched. He did not pause to consider the false premises she assumed, else he might have perceived the folly of her saying that Millicent had deprived her of Eustace, seeing

that Millicent was utterly ignorant of their close communion.

But he did not trouble himself to think too deeply. Enough that she doted upon him; and it suited his convenience to retain her. Therefore he went on his way rejoicing, and Mrs. Vere remained at home to congratulate herself on the success of her schemes.

This conversation took place after breakfast on the morning that Millicent, feeling so much better, urged her mother to go down and take her dinner in comfort.

"Do, dearest mother; it makes me quite unhappy to see you up here. I am sure papa will never let you come again if I treat you so badly."

She did not add, that it would increase her happiness considerably if her mother made her appearance below, and thus prevented her husband and Mrs. Vere from being so much together. She did not say so, but Mrs. Morley, with true motherly feeling, instinctively felt that it was in her daughter's heart.

Accordingly she put on her black velvet gown, and when the dinner-bell rang descended to the drawing-room. Mrs. Vere was already there, adorned to her very utmost

—*décoltée*, ringletted, perfumed, and decked out to the extreme of her power. She looked annoyed at the sight of Mrs. Morley, but forcing a smile said, with affected gaiety:—

"So dear Millicent is well enough to spare you? How glad I am! But I must ring, and beg of Ward to lay another cover. I did not expect the pleasure of your company."

"And could have done very well without it," muttered Mrs. Morley to herself; "but however, madam, I will take the airs out of you if I can." So she answered coolly, "Thank you, there is no need to trouble yourself. Mrs. Neville has already given her servants the necessary orders. She did that when she ordered dinner."

Mrs. Vere's brow grew dark, and the angry flush was even perceptible through her rouge. She bit her lip and said nothing. At that moment Eustace came down from his wife's room, and his brow was also slightly contracted, for, with the guilty knowledge that was at his heart, he never felt at ease in his mother-in-law's company.

A few minutes of very uncomfortable silence followed his appearance, and each was wonder-

ing who would speak first, when, dinner being announced, he gave his arm to Mrs. Morley, and leading the way was followed in sulky grandeur by Mrs. Vere.

Eustace led Mrs. Morley into the room without speaking. Ever since his wife had been up-stairs, Mrs. Vere had sat in the seat of honour; it just struck him, as he went down stairs, whether Mrs. Morley would not wish that distinguished seat herself. His doubts were cleared up the moment he entered the room. Mrs. Morley detached herself from his arm, and walked up to the head of the table, quietly saying:—

"I will represent dear Millicent to-day. I trust to God in a few days she will be able to look after her own interests."

She uttered these words with grave significance, looking steadily at Mrs. Vere all the time, for Mrs. Morley had heard a little of Mrs. Vere's goings on. If Millicent were too proud to gossip with her servants, Mrs. Morley was not; and she had gathered from Thompson (who, if Mrs. Vere had been an angel, would have hated and despised her on account of her filling that post of misery, a poor companion) one or two spicy anecdotes relative to the

airs Mrs. Vere gave herself now that Millicent was up-stairs.

"A himpudent little upstart, mam—mn,—the hairs she gives herself! Ward tells me as how she speaks as if the whole 'ouse was hern. And master takes no manner of notice of her imperence. Glad enough I shall be when my dear young lady comes down again to look after her own."

Mrs. Morley fully shared in this feeling, and therefore it was with inward exultation that she took the uppermost seat at the table, and lowered the pride, as she hoped, of the little flaunting woman at her side.

Mrs. Vere made no answer to Mrs. Morley's speech; she contented herself with raising her eyes timidly to Eustace's face, and then humbly took her place at the side. Two large tears rolled down her cheeks, as if they would have said, "I have not deserved this. I sat in that seat at your wish; I did not usurp it."

Eustace looked as black as thunder. He never had liked his mother-in-law; now he positively hated her—hated her, because his guilty conscience told him she suspected something between himself and Mrs. Vere, and

because his fears magnified the extent of those suspicions.

The meal passed uncomfortably enough. Eustace revenged himself by being cold and sarcastic, sneering at his mother-in-law's *gaucheries*, shrugging his shoulders at her using her knife to *rissoles*, and her fingers to her fruit. Mrs. Vere looked sympathetic, and answered the shrugs with expressive glances.

Now Mrs. Morley, though an ignorant woman, was no fool. She did not understand in what she was in fault, but felt that she was doing something not allowable in fashionable life, and that Eustace and Mrs. Vere were laughing at her. It was a long time since she had looked with favour upon her polished son-in-law, and nothing but the peril of her darling child would have induced her to take up her residence for an hour beneath his roof. But during her sojourn his conduct had been most kind and respectful, and he had thanked her so warmly for her kindness in coming, and seemed so devoted to Millicent and the baby, that her heart again melted in his favour, and she almost began to like him as much as she had done during the days of the courtship. But ridicule and con-

tempt are hard to bear. Eustace's undisguised disgust did its work. Mrs. Morley rose from table hot and uncomfortable, and walked to her daughter's room, with a feeling of hatred in her heart that nothing Eustace could do, in after life, could efface or subdue. Millicent noticed the dark angry flush on her mother's face the moment she entered, and fearing something had gone wrong, said, laughingly, in hopes to divert her thoughts into another channel:—

"Do take this little unconscionable cormorant. One would really think, dear mother, he knew what fashionable hours were, for he has been taking his dinner as well as you."

"I dare say a far happier one," said Mrs. Morley, drily, taking the child in her arms; then seating herself by her daughter's side, she added:—

"Now, Millicent, I am not going to say anything to agitate you, so you needn't look so alarmed. I have long seen that your husband despised your parents (at least me). Your father," continued she, proudly, "is as good a gentleman as any in the land, let the other be whom he may—but that's neither here nor there. I don't mean to complain of

your husband, he has a perfect right to dislike me if he chooses; but Millicent, my darling, take your mother's advice — I am not a fashionable lady, but I know what's what — and don't you keep that little viper, Mrs. Vere, any longer in the house than you can help."

Millicent's heart sank at these words, but she would not distress her mother by showing her emotion, or betraying, by word or look, any want of confidence in her husband, so she answered quietly :—

"I do not like Mrs. Vere any more than you do, dear mamma, but she is one of Eustace's oldest friends, and has behaved very kindly to me. Still, she only came to keep house whilst I was up-stairs, and when I get down again she will go away."

"I hope she will, that's all," groaned Mrs. Morley.

"If she don't, I must give her a polite little hint," rejoined Millicent, smiling.

"Hope she will take it, with all my heart," grumbled her mother. "But I much doubt it. If ever I saw an impudent, audacious woman, it is that little snake down in the dining-room. Thompson tells me that she has brought all her things, even an easy chair

and a table, and fitted up your best visitors' room quite to her own liking—that does not look much like a move. It's my belief, that if you don't make a stir my lady will take up her quarters here for good and all."

Millicent's spirit sickened at the picture her mother conjured up; but, determining not to show any signs of fear, she answered, gaily:—

"My dear mother, if she has brought her chairs and tables, she must just take them away again. I do not like her well enough to wish her to be an inmate of my house; it is quite enough to tolerate her for an acquaintance."

"Well, my dear, I am glad you show such a proper spirit. 'Forewarned is forearmed,' as the old proverb says; and I thought it better that you should be even with the little unprincipled thing."

Here Eustace entering the room, the conversation was dropped, and not again renewed. Millicent every day grew stronger, and at last her father came and took away his wife, saying, jokingly, that if he did not, she would stay there till Millicent had a daughter.

Eustace redeemed his character a little

on this occasion. He really, when out of his pet, was very grateful to Mrs. Morley for her affectionate care of his wife; and to testify it, he had an exquisite miniature likeness of Millicent copied, and set in a bracelet, with his and her hair entwined in a true-lover's knot at the back. This he presented to Mrs. Morley with such a hearty kiss, that the good lady's heart softened, and she took her leave, to Millicent's great delight, in high good humour: and as to Mr. Morley, he declared, when they got home and talked matters over, that Eustace might have his faults, like other young men, but that he was a fine fellow after all.

Mrs. Vere had prudently absented herself during this leave-taking, and the next day, when Millicent went down to dinner, nothing could exceed the devotion of Eustace, or the apparent delight of Mrs. Vere. She watched Millicent's every look, and anticipated her slightest wish; so much so, that poor Millicent felt quite uncomfortable because she could not entertain more charitable sentiments towards her. Perhaps she would, had she not, when parting for the night, seen a look of intelligence pass between her husband and her guest. The

look was not much in itself, but it decided her in her plan of action.

"Eustace, I want to say a word to you," said she, the next morning. "Nurse, take baby."

The nurse did as she was ordered, and immediately left the room.

"Well, what is it? Be quick, there's a good girl, for I have an appointment in the city at ten o'clock." Eustace spoke in a light, off-hand sort of way, for he partly guessed what was coming.

"I won't keep you long," said she, composedly, "but I am going to write to Mrs. Melville this morning, and I should like to ask her to come and stay with me a little; she can have Mrs. Vere's room when she goes, and the little room adjoining will do for Mr. Melville's dressing-room."

"But Mrs. Vere has not spoken of going," returned Eustace, gravely, "and I don't see, Millicent, how you can be so ungracious as to ask her. She has devoted herself to you during all your illness, and I don't see how you can, with any propriety, ask her to quit the house the moment you are better."

"I did not mean to ask her to quit the

house at a minute's notice; but surely there can be no harm in my telling her that I expect other friends on a visit?"

"I don't know what you mean by 'other friends.' I have not the honour of even personally knowing Mr. Melville, and his wife was only your governess."

"Mrs. Melville was certainly my governess," returned Millicent, with dignity, "but she was also always treated as one of our family; and with justice, for she was the daughter of my father's oldest friend."

"I neither know nor care who she was," returned he, carelessly; "it is a matter of perfect indifference to me: but if she were the oldest friend you had in the world she could not come here; for the fact is, Millicent, I was going to speak to you. Poor Alice—I mean Mrs. Vere—has been disappointed of her allowances; that brute, her husband, has not sent them regularly for some time; and therefore—therefore, Millicent, I have offered her a home for a short time, till she can get her affairs settled. So you see, my love, for the present at least, you must put Mrs. Melville out of the question."

No wonder she had brought her chairs

and tables! Millicent's spirit rose—she would not have that hateful woman forced upon her without a struggle.

"Eustace," and she looked him steadily in the face, "I am sorry you have held out any such hopes to Mrs. Vere. You know I don't like her as an acquaintance, and have a particular dislike to her remaining under my roof."

"A particular dislike to her remaining under your roof!" And Eustace's hot blood fired up at, as he thought, this monstrous innovation of his rights as head and master of the house.

"Pray, madam, am I not master in this house? Are my wishes not to be consulted?"

"Your wishes are always consulted, I think," returned Millicent, mildly; "it is very seldom I ever differ from you, or dispute your authority: but I have an unconquerable dislike to Mrs. Vere. Surely, Eustace, you will not be so cruel as to insist upon her remaining, whether I like it or no?"

"I cannot be answerable," returned he, coldly, "for your childish likes or dislikes. But, like her or not, here she stays, so long as I will it. A pretty thing, indeed, not to be master in my own house! But you will find, madam," turning quite savagely on the trem-

bling Millicent, "that I am none of your henpecked husbands — not I!"

"Madam!" his adored Millicent had come to be styled "madam!" and, hardly safe from her confinement, was raged at and threatened because she presumed to have a will of her own! Yet, strange to say, though outwardly so harsh, he was inwardly fuming at being thus forced to pain the gentle heart which he knew did its very utmost to please him.

Poor Millicent! her soul died within her, but her lips never moved. Her husband's violence affrighted her, but did not intimidate her. She saw it was useless arguing the point any further, and therefore said:—

"Of course, Eustace, if you have made up your mind to afford a home to Mrs. Vere, there is nothing more to be said. I had thought ——" but here her strength gave way, and, overcome by vexation and physical weakness, she sank back and burst into tears.

Eustace did not know what to do. He hated the very sight of tears, and Millicent's drove him almost wild. He felt that he was acting like a brute, and yet could not do anything else; and cursing himself, Mrs. Vere, and everything in the whole world, he darted out

of the room, and nearly knocking down Thompson, whom he ran against in very close approximation to the dressing-room door, he ordered her with a scowl (which, as she said, not only froze her blood but the very marrow in her bones), to go directly to her mistress, who was taken faint, and said that he should send the doctor up as soon as possible to see what was the matter.

Thompson knew that this was an excuse: however, she did not venture on a reply, and hastily went to her mistress.

But Millicent had recovered her self-possession, even in this short time; and calmly telling her maid that she had been seized with sudden faintness, but was better now, dismissed her to summon the nurse and the baby from the nursery up-stairs.

Mrs. Vere learnt the issue of the conference from a few cross and hasty words addressed to her by Eustace, as he was going out of the house. But what cared she for his cross words or Millicent's grave looks? She had gained her point—she was domiciled under the roof of her hated rival, and it should go hard with her, as she muttered to herself, if she did not contrive to crush her one way or

the other. And so elated did this amiable reflection make her, that she went about, as Thompson wrathfully termed it, in her confidential chat with Mr. Ward, "a holding her head up and looking more himperdent than ever."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FATAL DISCOVERY.

THE days glided on with Millicent, as they do with most of us, at their own steady pace, whether joy or sorrow occupy the hours. The season was at its fullest; and, spite of domestic discomforts, she took her part in the fashionable world, and excited envy and admiration wherever she appeared. The women ran her down—the men set her up, absolutely glorifying her, and worshipping her as if she were the eighth wonder of the world. Jane Clarke adored her; and Mrs. Neville's court dress, and Mrs. Neville's bonnets, and Mrs. Neville's cloaks, were on view from one week's end to the other.

Millicent was presented by a duchess; and not a second-rate one, by any means. And when, the next day, the account appeared in the "Morning Post" of her dress,

her feathers, her diamonds, and her beauty, Guildford Street could hardly contain itself to think of the luck of one of its most unobtrusive daughters.

Did she think herself lucky?

Alas! No!

She had but one consolation in the midst of all this grandeur.

Her child?

Yes! her child throve and prospered, and verily grew into a lovely boy. It seemed sent expressly by Heaven to fill the aching void which Eustace's conduct began to make in her heart; for, young as she was, she could be no longer blind to the fact, that some secret intelligence subsisted between him and Mrs. Vere.

And Mrs. Vere did her best to promote her suspicions. She gloried in her power, and wished for nothing better than to render Millicent jealous and spiteful. Could she but urge or goad her into doing or saying anything to provoke Eustace's temper, her first grand step would be gained.

But she manœuvred and manœuvred in vain. Much as Millicent disliked her—much as her presence annoyed her—she could not

be brought to utter a mistrustful word of her husband; whatever she thought, was kept religiously locked in her own breast.

Once or twice she had gently hinted to him that it would please her much better if he exercised his generosity towards Mrs. Vere at a distance. But Eustace related as much of his conversation with that lady as bore upon the subject, and dilated largely on the refinement of her mind, which prevented her from receiving pecuniary favours.

"So be a good girl, Millicent, and treat the poor little thing civilly as long as she stays. She will go down into Lincolnshire in a month or two, and then you will be quit of her. I am sure she feels that you dislike her. I suspect, if she knew where to go, she would not stay a day longer in your house."

Millicent, in her own private mind, thought otherwise; and could not see, if she disliked her present home so much, why she could not go down into the country now, as well as two months hence: for she was only going to her sister's, with whom, surely, there need be no such great amount of ceremony used. But she was too delicate to say so to her husband; and merely answered:—

"I am sorry my looks offend Mrs. Vere; for it must be my looks, seeing that I have never breathed a syllable to her, which could imply either liking or disliking. But I am afraid that I am a bad hand at dissembling. I do not like her; fear I never shall: but so long as she is your guest, I will do my best to make her comfortable."

This speech discomposed Eustace not a little. He saw plainly that, however gentle and yielding his wife might be, it was simply out of deference to him as her husband, and not because she was won over to his views of the case.

And her obstinacy, as he termed it, wounded his self-love; for he reasoned as men will do sometimes, that so long as his wife knew nothing of the *liaison* between himself and Mrs. Vere she sustained no injury, and that, therefore, her dislike was more shown out of a spirit of opposition than anything else, and from a latent desire of exerting her authority —an authority which he had no mind she should establish.

Had he looked into her pure, honest, trustful eyes, he might have seen that, though silent, she was not so unsuspicious as he thought.

But he did not; and though in his heart of hearts he hated Mrs. Vere, yet so irritable was his temperament, that, let Millicent only look indifferent at her guest, and he would instantly load her with his attentions.

And did not Mrs. Vere's heart glow and her eyes sparkle at those moments? Believe me they did. Let a woman alone for sparing another. She drove her nails harder than ever Jael did into Sisera's head.

It is a known fact, and I am grieved to confirm its truth, that in such cases women are always the most barefaced and hardened. Mrs. Vere openly gloried in what ought to have been her unceasing study to conceal; and it was as much as Eustace could do to keep her quiet in the presence of his wife.

Unfortunately, too, habit begets a sense of security, and Mrs. Vere and Eustace had carried on their secret arrangements so skilfully, that at last they quite forgot that detection was possible.

Millicent shut her eyes outwardly, and opened them inwardly to what was passing around her. She fervently prayed that the worst her soul dreaded was not the case. If her suspicions were not correct; if her hus-

band was only neglectful—not criminal—all other woes would be stingless.

But if he were ——? Alas! what was to become of her?

She had soon to decide, for the crisis came quicker than she expected.

One night Millicent retired to rest much earlier than was her wont; she had been nervous and out of spirits all day—a thing most unusual with her—but somehow a heaviness hung over her: a vague feeling of terror oppressed her soul, and thinking that her depression arose from over-excitement, for she had been out latterly almost every night, she determined, instead of going to the Opera, to stay at home, and try the efficacy of a good night's rest.

Therefore, when Eustace came in to dress for dinner, she told him how unwell she felt, and asked if he had any objection to her letting her mother have the loan of their box for the night.

Eustace graciously consented; in fact, he was glad to be able to oblige her, for he saw that she looked very pale, and dreaded lest it might be a preliminary symptom of illness.

He wanted to send for Dr. Peyton, but

this Millicent would not hear of, declaring that she was better already, and that, after all, it was nothing more than a fit of laziness that had overcome her.

Still he could not conquer his fears, and to Mrs. Vere's great disgust, had neither eyes nor ears for anything but Millicent during dinner, and ended by going up with her to her boudoir, and remaining with her all the rest of the evening.

Millicent felt happier than she had done for some time past, and quite laughed at herself for having been so out of spirits. Eustace was so affectionate, so tender, so careful of her comforts, so loth to leave her, that her very soul yearned with tenderness, and she saw him depart with the blissful conviction that all her suspicions with respect to Mrs. Vere were groundless; and that, after all, her husband's attentions to that obnoxious little person arose only from his goodness of heart.

Soothed by these pleasant feelings, she soon fell asleep, and awoke not till aroused by the crying of her darling in the nursery overhead.

To spring up, to slip her feet into slippers, and herself into a dressing-gown, was but the

work of an instant; and while wondering what the hour could be, seeing that Eustace had evidently not returned home, she crept noiselessly up-stairs.

There she found the young Clarence in high sulks, he having awoke up in a very cross humour, and the nurse being quite unable to pacify him.

Millicent took him in her arms, and tried to lull him off to sleep, as only a mother knows how; but it required all her caresses to accomplish her object.

After a time, however, she succeeded; and laying him gently down in his cot, retraced her steps to her own room.

When she reached Mrs. Vere's apartment, the door of which was tightly closed, she paused, fancying that she heard her child cry again.

She listened for some time; but at last, finding that her fears were without foundation, she was just retreating to her own room, when the door of Mrs. Vere's room opened, and her husband came out.

Millicent started. The truth—the bitter—the fatal truth flashed into her mind in an instant. She looked at her husband—he at her—their eyes met, and hers told him

more plainly than if legions of voices had shouted it out in his ears, that his guilty secret was known, and that henceforth Millicent would be no wife to him.

It was a criminating position, but Eustace did not lose his self-possession; he was not going to have the worst of it, if he could help it.

"Millicent!" he exclaimed, in affected surprise: "anything the matter? I hope you are not ill! Poor Mrs. Vere is (pointing to her room). She called me in just now, taking me for one of the servants. I don't know what to say of her: but go back, my love, lest it should be anything infectious."

Millicent's lips curled with scorn, but she obeyed her husband; and he followed her, rejoicing that he had got off so easily.

He was soon undeceived. When they were fairly in the room, Millicent said, calmly but resolutely:—

"I have been prepared for this for a long time. To-night has satisfied those suspicions which, God knows, I would have shut my eyes to if I could. But it is too plain—too palpable, Eustace. Little dreaming that you were in Mrs. Vere's room, I have stood out-

side her door, listening for some minutes to ascertain whether all was quiet in the nursery.

"Have you?" he said, with the most careless indifference, yawning as he spoke; "and what of that?"

"Nothing but this," returned Millicent, gravely; for, though grieved and heart-struck, she was not daunted: "that woman leaves this house to-morrow morning."

"'That woman,' as you are pleased to call her, leaves this house at my pleasure, not at yours," cried he, lashing himself into a rage, as he noted the determined cast of her countenance; "and I will thank you for the future to speak more respectfully of my friends."

"Mrs. Vere has forfeited all claim to my respect," returned Millicent, sternly; "but there is no need to waste words upon what is not worth the discussion. After what has passed this night you cannot suppose that I will permit her to remain another day under the same roof with me."

"Upon my word I am extremely obliged to you for taking the management of my house entirely out of my hands! Under the same roof with you! As to the house being mine, that seems a fact that has entirely

escaped your notice. What you mean by this conduct at all I am quite at a loss to understand: perhaps you will be good enough to explain yourself — I am a bad hand at riddles."

"The explanation is very simple," returned Millicent, drily, determined not to show the torture she was enduring: "I do not choose to live any longer with your mistress."

"You are choice in your expressions, I must say," sneered he, trying to conceal the rage and mortification that he felt; "but you make a mistake: like all jealous women, you let your temper get the better of your reason."

"I am not jealous," and an almost imperceptible expression of scorn passed over Millicent's face. "I must be destitute of self-respect, indeed, were I jealous of a man who has treated me as you have done. As I said before, though deeply wounded, I am not taken by surprise. It is idle for you to deny your guilt, it only adds meanness to your other sins. I have but one word to say: Mrs. Vere leaves this house in the morning, or else I go to my father and mother and tell all that has passed."

Millicent uttered these words with a sternness which, as she afterwards said, surprised herself. She shed no tears, she felt no grief—all that was to come: all that she felt was burning indignation at the wrong done her, and bitter contempt of the man upon whom she had wasted the wealth of an untried heart, and lavished her warm affections, only to be made his dupe.

His dupe! doubtless he and his paramour often gloried over the ease with which they gulled his poor, fond fool of a wife. The thought steeled her—nerved her: all softer, all more feminine feelings, were swallowed up in the intense wound her pride had received.

But if she felt stern, Eustace felt furious. Was he awake, or did he dream? Was this his wife—his Millicent—the little girl he had married and raised out of obscurity? She—she dare to lay down a plan of action for him to follow! She dictate to him! she absolutely threaten him! He had no very great notions of morality, but what he had were deadened by his vehement indignation at her thus presuming to lay down the law to him. He

seized her violently by the wrists, and gasped out:—

"You go to Guildford Street? Go—go this instant!—this minute! Go out of the house, and never return! Go to perdition, if you like!"

"Thank you," said Millicent, composedly, "I have no wish; neither shall I go at your bidding. Your violence is unmanly,—not worthy of you. And why should it be so? There is no need for any quarrelling. You prefer another to me. Be it so. I do not complain. Whatever I may feel I shall religiously keep to myself. All I ask of you is to remove this obnoxious person out of my sight."

She did not complain! That was the worst part of the business. He wanted her to complain, to cry, to sob, to go into hysterics, and finally, on his promising to send Mrs. Vere away, to throw herself into his arms and make it up. All this he expected, and all this would have pleased him. He did not care a rush for Mrs. Vere or her feelings. Now that the worst was over, and Millicent knew all, he felt relieved, and glad of an

excuse for sending the other away. Millicent's seeming indifference piqued his pride; her stern decision alarmed him. Was it possible that, after all, she did not love him?

A sharp pang shot through his heart, but it only enraged him the more. He determined to pit his strength against her weakness,—it was kill or cure; and he answered, sarcastically:—

"How very wisely we speak! A second Daniel come to judgment! But there is one thing that has escaped your penetrating wisdom: perhaps you may not take into consideration, that when you go to Guildford Street you do not take my child with you."

Millicent's lip quivered, and her cheek blanched, if possible, a little paler than before; but she stood her ground, and answered promptly:—

"I have not overlooked the possibility that, influenced by the suggestions of that bad woman, you would even try to part me from my child; but I am convinced that you cannot: till the boy is seven years old he is mine, and it will depend greatly upon your own conduct whether the law will give him up to you afterwards."

Eustace's patience fairly gave way at hearing the pros and cons so calmly discussed. Would nothing frighten her? His passion literally boiled over, and he shouted out:—

"Yours, indeed! Nothing is yours! You are mine,—mine in this world and the next—mine through all eternity! The very hair on your head is mine!" seizing hold of the soft tresses that floated like a cloud over her white dress. "You shall not go!"

"I have no wish to go," said Millicent, rejoiced to bring him to any terms, so as to avoid public exposure. "Mrs. Vere is going to her sister's: let her go to-morrow. It can signify little to her whether she makes her visit immediately or this day two months: indeed I should think, after this night's discovery, she will be as anxious to leave as I shall be to be rid of her."

Eustace thought differently; but seeing that violence would not avail with Millicent, was not sorry also to come to a compromise, so he said, sullenly enough:—

"As you have chosen to take such a ridiculous notion into your head, I am sure the sooner she goes the better, poor thing!

Had you asked properly, and not behaved yourself so very unbecomingly, I should have told you so at the first."

"I am sorry if I have offended you," returned Millicent; "it was not my intention to do so."

"But you have done so," cried Eustace, with the air of a martyr, "and I am deeply wounded, Millicent, by your conduct to-night, so unlike anything I had a right to expect; therefore, under the circumstances, you must not be surprised if, until you see your conduct in its true light, I should prefer our being quite strangers to one another."

He said this with an air of cold dignity, thinking he had driven a shaft home at last. Great therefore was his surprise, and intense his mortification, when she answered, quite coolly:—

"I am glad that you have spared me the pain of making the same proposal. After the event of this night, I feel that I could never be an affectionate wife to you; my spirit has been too deeply wounded. But you will find me the same in other respects; what has passed will never be told by me. No!" and her voice grew firmer, "not even to my father

and mother: your secret and your reputation are quite safe in my hands."

Eustace looked at her with strange feelings stirring at his heart. Never had he seen her look more lovely; the excitement of the moment lent colour to her cheek and brilliancy to her eyes, while her golden hair encircled her face like a glory. She might have been some saint or wandering spirit from the heavenward Eden, bound to this weary world on some errand of mercy and love, so pure, so holy did she look.

And this beautiful sainted being was to be lost for a Mrs. Vere!

He shuddered. No! not lost—that was out of the question. Of course he should soon reduce her to reason, and bring her to his feet. He had only to be firm, that was all; and determining to begin at once he said, half contemptuously:—

"Well, I am glad at least that we agree on one point. And as it is very cold, and I am very sleepy, I think we had better end this disagreeable discussion. To-morrow you can make the necessary arrangements."

"I will do so," said Millicent; "but I am now going to leave you. I wish to speak

to Mrs. Vere, and I prefer doing so at once."

"As you please," returned her husband; and Millicent, taking up the light, moved towards the door.

"Cursedly awkward!" muttered he, as her white dress disappeared through the doorway. "I never saw anything like women for making scenes. Couldn't she be quiet for one night? There'll be a regular set-to between her and Alice, I know. I must listen, and go to the rescue if I hear a noise."

He listened and listened, and strained his sense of hearing nervously to catch the slightest sound, but no word or murmur broke the profound stillness that reigned around. At last, as often happens in such cases, in the middle of his listening he fell fast asleep.

In the meanwhile Millicent walked calmly into Mrs. Vere's room, the door of which was, of course, a-jar, just as Eustace had left it, and she found the little perfidious traitor, unconscious of the great events that had been passing so near her, fast asleep.

Millicent shaded the candle with her hand, and looked fixedly at her. And this was the woman for whose sake she was insulted and

deserted! Yes, she, Millicent, who had loved — ay, did even now, spite of her wrongs, love him with such a true, such a faithful devotion! And yet she, the mother of his beautiful, his glorious boy, was despised, neglected, put on one side, for the frail, miserable, worn-out, *blasé* being that lay unconscious before her!

Mrs. Vere certainly did not look to advantage. "Beauty, when unadorned, is adorned the most," is a poetical maxim we are all well acquainted with; but I doubt much whether Beauty, when arrived at a certain age, does not look vastly better in full dress. Thus Mrs. Vere, divested of all her artificial adornments, cut but a sorry figure.

Millicent's eye rested unconsciously on the glass that stood upon the toilette-table by the side of the bed, and she could not, it must be confessed, resist a throb of gratified vanity as her own young and lovely face presented itself to her view. But the feeling of elation was momentary. Alas! of what value was that beauty? None to her husband, and therefore none to herself.

She looked at the sleeping woman before her: the reptile who had crept into her home

only to destroy her peace. Stern, dark feelings filled her breast. She touched her! Mrs. Vere awoke!

"What is the matter, Eustace? What brings you back?" said she, between sleeping and waking.

"It is not Eustace," returned Millicent, coldly; "it is Eustace's wife."

Mrs. Vere uttered a suppressed scream, and started up in bed. She looked Millicent fixedly in the face, and saw in that one glance that she knew all: but her hardihood did not desert her. It is a true saying, though a severe one, that an abandoned woman is never sensible of shame; perhaps because she knows that her doom is sealed. But be this as it may, Mrs. Vere pretended to rouse herself, saying, in a childlike voice:—

"Dear Mrs. Neville, you startled me so! I have been dreaming, I think—fancying I was back in dear old Barbadoes, and that your husband and I were children again. I declare, so lifelike was my dream, that when you spoke I thought it was he, and called him by his name!"

"Indeed!" returned Millicent, drily; "you have had but a short time for such a lifelike

dream. A very short time ago my husband quitted this room. I met him at the door."

Mrs. Vere winced; but nowise daunted, said, with the utmost effrontery:—

"Oh, dreams, you know, are very deceptive! One dreams half a lifetime in ten minutes! Yes, I recollect I was very ill, and Mr. Neville (great and respectable stress upon the name) heard me groaning, and put his head in to know what was the matter."

"It is a pity you did not ring for Thompson, she would have rendered you any assistance you might have required."

Mrs. Vere glanced at Millicent like a tigress; but Millicent, not wishing to prolong the interview, spoke again:—

"We will not further discuss this matter, Mrs. Vere; suffice it for me to say, that what I have long suspected has now become positive certainty. I shall not condescend to enter into any explanation as to the why or the where; I would not degrade myself to your level sufficiently to do that. Enough for you to know that Mr. Neville sees the necessity of my request, which is, that you arrange to leave this house to-morrow morning."

Mrs. Vere was positively struck dumb with

consternation. The icy coldness of Millicent's manner left her nothing to hope. There was a stern light in the eyes of the pure woman before her that quelled even her audacity. She thought of hysterics (she was very great in them), but much doubted if they would succeed with Millicent; so, thinking it best to treat the matter as a joke, she lisped out:—

"So you're jealous, are you, of poor Eustace and me? Poor fellow! And I, who have known him from a boy! How sorry I am that he was so good-natured as to come!"

Millicent deigned no answer to this tirade, but taking up her candle, without vouchsafing another word, turned upon Mrs. Vere the full benefit of a glance of unutterable scorn, and left that lady to her reflections.

Slowly, as if numbed with a sense of bitter pain, she crept back to her room, and seeing that her husband was in a sound sleep, went noiselessly into his dressing-room, and sat down to compose her thoughts. The task was not an easy one; yet, before she had been seated an hour, her plans were all taken and matured.

She would be guided entirely by Eustace's conduct to her; and if he showed signs of repentance—if he gave her sincere proofs that

he had given up his evil ways — if he renounced the little unworthy woman she had just left — why, then, she would recollect her marriage vow — that he was the father of her child, and forgive him.

Forgive him! ay, she would gladly have forgiven him at that instant; for she loved him, and Love is an imperious master, and no respecter of persons. Though he be steeped in sin, laden with crime, yet, let a woman love a man sincerely, truthfully, with her heart and soul, and she will love him as long as there remains a pulse to throb in her body.

Now Millicent did love her husband with her heart and soul; but Pride, that demon which destroys half the happiness of this life, and turns what otherwise might be a garden of Eden into a tangled wilderness, stepped forward to give his baleful advice. She could and would have forgiven everything but the deadly insult of having such a woman brought into her house.

"Yes!" as Pride whispered; "and did he not quite compel her to receive her — and for what?"

"No! her wrongs were too great," she cried; "she could not forgive them!"

Oh, Millicent! Millicent! He who came upon earth to save all, in whose lips were no guile, in whom was no shadow of turning, He has said, "Forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. VERE LEAVES IN A HURRY.

THE next morning Millicent breakfasted in her dressing-room under plea of a severe headache, which certainly was no falsehood, as her looks attested. She did so, not only from a determination not to sit down again in company with Mrs. Vere, but also from a wifelike desire to spare her husband the disagreeable necessity of meeting her.

Mrs. Vere, therefore, had Eustace all to herself; and, as might be expected, he was anything but in an agreeable temper. He was out of humour, savagely cross with himself, with her, and with the whole world; so that before breakfast was half over they had a desperate quarrel. He laid all the blame of the discovery upon her; she retorted, and a fierce struggle ensued, which ended as all their struggles did by her going into prolonged hysterics.

Eustace was beyond measure provoked; but unable to call for assistance, and alarmed lest any of the servants should come into the room, he patched up a sort of sulky reconciliation, and told her not to make a fool of herself.

As Mrs. Vere had no mind to do that, she obeyed him, swallowed her sobs, choked down her gurglings, dried her tears, and meekly listened to the plans he laid down for her future guidance.

She was very great in this kind of melodramatic acting, and therein lay the secret of her success. She always began by going off into a raging fury, and ended by taking the whole weight of his faults as well as her own, and bearing them without a murmur upon her shoulders.

The servants looked on very curiously, and great speculations were afloat in the housekeeper's room as to what was wrong in the upper regions. Ward guessed all was not right; for when he went to dress his master he received orders to put up a few things, as they were going to Brighton for a short time.

Ward bowed, and asked what time they went; and not dreaming, of course, but that his mistress was going also, inquired if he

should take charge of Thompson. Eustace answered curtly that Mrs. Neville was not going.

Ward saw that his master was in one of his tigerish humours, and hazarded no further remarks. But as he told Thompson, when they were safe at breakfast, he shouldn't a bit wonder if that impudent Mrs. Vere was going.

"Now, that will be a shame if she does!" returned the irate damsel. "I declare, if I was my lady, I wouldn't put up with it—I wouldn't!"

"There's many things women have to put up with," returned Mr. Ward, reflectively; for, though he had a chivalrous liking for his young and lovely mistress, he had also a great reverence for his master. Also, as he had decided intentions of some day converting Miss Thompson into Mrs. Ward, he did not wish to encourage that lady in anything savouring of disobedience to the marital yoke.

"I hopes, James, you ain't a-taking that woman's part?" returned Thompson, reproachfully. "As for me, I can't abide the sight of the little deceitful toad."

"You women are so jealous of one another,"

returned Mr. Ward. "No, I ain't taking her part; I hates and despises her quite as much as you do. But master is master, and what he does in his own house ought not to be disputed."

Sound sense that, Mr. Ward, and uncommonly sound reasoning too; for your sex take marvellous good care that nothing shall dispute their sovereign authority, Quarrel as much as you will among yourselves, you are as close as cement if you fancy any of your privileges are about to be invaded: you make the laws first, and put them in force afterwards, and all that is left for our luckless sex is, to kiss the rod and obey.

But to return from this slight digression. Mr. Ward looked unutterable things, and Mrs. Thompson held up her hands, when, later in the day, Mrs. Vere departed without even seeing Millicent, and unattended by Mr. Neville, being consigned to the guardianship of the page, to see that she was properly booked and ticketed, per Great Northern Railway, for Nettlebridge, Nottinghamshire; and afterwards Eustace and the magnificent Mr. Ward made their way, without let or hindrance, to the York Hotel, Brighton.

Millicent's first feeling on their departure was one of complete relief. She had loved Eustace too thoroughly to be able at first to meet him under these altered circumstances, without feeling a severe pang, and she felt thankful for even so short a season of rest, wherein she could collect her thoughts and map out what would probably have to be the plan of her whole life.

She had not been Eustace's wife for nearly two years without having fully read and studied his character. She had done so with considerable aptitude, and adroitly seizing upon the peculiarities of his temper, turned them to the best advantage.

She easily discovered that he was warm-hearted and impulsive, open to flattery, not deaf to advice, but impervious to threats or commands. You might lead, but certainly not drive him; also that he had an inflexible germ of obstinacy in his composition, that required the sweetness of an angel and the wisdom of a Solomon to combat and overcome.

He had shown this unamiable trait in his character most sturdily in affairs relating to Mrs. Vere, and it was perhaps his harsh, un-

gracious manner in anything pertaining to her, that first roused Millicent's suspicions, and made her nourish such a deep-rooted dislike to having Mrs. Vere in the house. She felt sure there was a mystery which she could not fathom, and which disquieted her accordingly.

Now, alas! her doubts were cleared up, and that in a manner that threatened the ruin of her life's happiness. What a change a few hours had brought forth! She had lain down at night, hoping against hope that she was the object of her husband's passionate love; she had risen up in the morning to find that love, like the apples of the Dead Sea, nought but ashes, and his devotion only the passing fancy of an hour.

She awoke as out of a dream. She was too inexperienced to know or to read the subtle workings of a man's heart, or she would have known that fancies for the million, and love for the one, are separated in his breast as far apart as one end of the rainbow from the other.

There is an innermost temple, a sacred shrine, a holy spot, hidden from human eyes, unprofaned by coarse touch or irreverent tread,

wherein man — ay! the vilest, the most hardened, the most libertine of his sex — at one time or other, encloses the object of his pure and passionate love. And if woman would but believe that that object remains intact; that let him fill his heart like a gallery of pictures, place statues into every niche, still that innermost spot is kept carefully closed; and not one of those shadowy ghosts, that encircle its doors, are even able to penetrate the sacredness of its sanctuary.

Such was Millicent to Eustace. Such a spot she inhabited, and in such a temple was she shrined, and kept carefully veiled. Such an idol many a woman is to her husband, though she little deems it.

But Millicent did not understand this nice working and balancing of human affections. She only saw the great insult that had been put upon her; and the thought of that insult steeled her better and softer feelings.

And yet those softer feelings gushed into her heart as she sat in her solitary chamber, and forced her mind to look steadily on what was before her. But she drove them back, and determined to preserve her self-respect at any price.

Eustace returned in about a fortnight, and Millicent invited her parents and Geraldine, who was now regularly "out," to meet him. Her husband had written and begged her so to do; and taking his request as a proof that he still clung to Mrs. Vere, determined to be colder and more reserved than ever, and confine herself simply to the performance of those courtesies which the rules of good breeding impose upon its followers.

And Eustace returned her politeness with interest. Whenever he was deeply offended, he was always scrupulously polite. And though he was indubitably in the wrong, yet so great was his self-love, and so lax his morality, that he worked himself into considering his case one of great hardship.

"Did he not marry her," was his oft-repeated assertion to himself, "from motives of the purest and most passionate love? Had he not taken her out of a sphere considerably below his own; transplanted her into another world altogether? Had he not surrounded her with luxuries, and loaded her with kindness and affection? And now, because she takes a jealous fit in her head, she turns round

upon me, her husband, and coolly tells me I may seek a wife elsewhere!"

"Be it so," would he cry, lashing himself into a fury; while his dark eyes flashed fire, and his handsome mouth, set into hard lines. "Be it so; and she shall ask and pray, and pray and ask, before she ever rests her head upon this breast again."

For Eustace was like a great criminal that won't confess. He had not admitted his crime, and therefore she only acted upon conjecture: and upon conjecture he considered she had no right to condemn him.

The evening went off pleasantly. Eustace was studiously attentive to his wife, and in one of his most courteous and agreeable humours to Mr. and Mrs. Morley; so much so, that he quite softened their parental hearts, and they went home at night mutually agreeing that, after all, Eustace was a delightful man, and that Millicent was decidedly the luckiest girl they knew.

Not so Geraldine. She dearly loved her sister, and saw deeper than any one, judging from her light-hearted, gleesome temper, would have given her credit for; and though she

laughed and bantered with Eustace all the evening, she nevertheless, in writing to her dear Mrs. Frank Melville, expressed it as her opinion that some very great estrangement had risen up between Eustace and Millicent: but that, of course, she should religiously keep her thoughts to herself.

Poor Millicent! her heart ached sadly when Eustace came back into the drawing-room, after seeing the Morley party to their hired brougham, and with an air of courtly politeness lighted her chamber-candle, took up his own, opened the door for her, and wished her good-night, with a calmness which showed his heart to be quite at ease.

Millicent had just firmness enough to enable her to reach her own room. Then she sank on her knees, and sobbed her heart out.

A deadly chill seized upon her heart.

Was this cold, severe, sarcastic, polite, freezing, unbending individual, her Eustace? This haughty, offended-looking man, her darling, her idol? The man she chose, in preference to her loving, doting, honest-hearted cousin — this harsh, unforgiving being, whom she should have to pass her whole life with?

She quite forgot that she was to do a great heroic part; that it was she who, after proper submission on his part, was to forgive him, and take him back into favour. She only thought of how he had once loved her, and dreaded lest that love was gone for ever.

Poor Millicent! where was the wonderful pride that was to sustain her under every difficulty?

Where, indeed!

Gone!

Washed out of her heart by rivers of living tears!

Tears, the offspring of intense love and wounded feeling.

Tears, the force of which showed how vain it is to pit worldly pride or angry feelings against deep and passionate love!

She looked back into her soul; and how vain, how absurd, now seemed her conduct!

For suppose, whispered the love that never dies; suppose even the worst—was he, for that reason, to be treated as she had done?—was she to be his judge?—was it her place to look on him with scorn?—she, who had vowed to obey him in weal and in woe? Yet she had spurned his offers to clear him-

self, and wilfully shut her heart to his appeal, and now she had lost him!

And, sobbed she, in the bitterness of her self-reproach, he hated her already, and would teach her child to hate her—nay, take it from her; and at this thought she sprang to her child's cot, and pressed it wildly to her breast.

The infant awoke with the pressure, and began to cry. This recalled Millicent to herself. She walked up and down the room, hushing him on her bosom, and at last lulled by her tender caresses he went off into a peaceful sleep, and she again laid him down gently in his cot.

Millicent felt calmed; the very touch of the child had soothed her harassed feelings. Again she sank upon her knees; but this time it was in prayer—fervent, heart-stirring prayer. She prayed for mercy, for forgiveness, for charity, for patience under any trials it might be her lot to endure. She prayed to Him who is ever open to the cries of those who lay their whole soul at His feet, to make her way smooth and her path straight, and to give her that peace which passeth all understanding.

And her prayers rose up in the stillness of that night to the throne of Him whose ear never closes; and those prayers of real, fervent feeling were answered.

She prayed for peace — and she found it.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. BARTON MEETS WITH HIS DESERTS.

MILLICENT'S life now became one of extreme dullness. Eustace was rarely at home,—never at dinner-time, unless there were company; then his old brilliancy of spirit would flash out, and friends went away thinking that Millicent was not such a charming person as they had at first thought her; and that they much feared poor Neville had thrown himself away.

Mrs. Vere greatly helped to increase these reports, for though still in Nottinghamshire (Eustace not deeming it prudent for her to reappear as yet), she contrived, by the aid of the Rev. Mr. Barton, to do Millicent as much injury as lay in her power.

She was in daily communication with him; by her orders he haunted the Brook-Street

house, and furnished her with an exact account of its goings on.

It was very easy for him, under one pretext or the other, to obtain an entrance every day. Millicent was too wrapt up in her sorrows to notice anything particular in his manner, and much too innocent to suspect a man of his profession of any unworthy designs.

Therefore, when day after day he came and came, she only thought him rather an officious, troublesome little man. But as he professed an almost idolatrous love for her boy, and never came without being laden with toys and playthings, she did not like to curtail his visits.

He was a handy man, too, in his way, and Millicent, who looked upon him much as she did upon the household apothecary, scrupled not to make use of him; and he, flattering himself that he was positively making an impression upon the beautiful Mrs. Neville, trotted to all the libraries, got all the newest works, explained and lectured upon Faraday's new theory, and Buckle's ideas of women, and leant his arm upon the chimneypiece, and fixed his eyes so perseveringly upon Millicent while he held forth, that at last she had

some doubts as to whether he was not a mesmeriser, and trying his skill upon her to keep his hand in.

Mrs. Vere rejoiced to hear of the successful footing he had gained, and conjured him to persevere. He was nothing loth — Millicent's was just the sort of house he loved to flourish away in. He was not fond of the society of his own sex — he did not particularly shine in their society. He knew that most of his male friends laughed at him, and he had no mind that his fair devotees should be witnesses to such sacrilege. He did not relish their hearing their idol made game of. So he was particularly shy and silent when his own sex were lording it about.

Thus he was quite at home in Millicent's drawing-room, and Mrs. Vere, though she knew Millicent was impervious to his attacks, also knew, that if he were never out of the Brook-Street house, Eustace might be brought to believe that his pure and immaculate Millicent was indulging herself by reprisals.

But Eustace was too good a judge of human nature, woman's nature in particular, to entertain such a thought for a single instant. He felt quite indignant with Mrs. Vere for

hinting in one of her letters that she had heard it rumoured that Millicent had sought consolation elsewhere. He knew better: nevertheless, he cast about in his mind whose visits or attentions it was that could have given rise to such a rumour, and the only person that presented himself was Mr. Barton.

He laughed at the idea of such a ridiculous creature supplanting him in the heart of his Millicent. Nevertheless, he thought he would just put her on her guard; so the next morning at breakfast he said, quietly,—

"Was that Mr. Barton I met yesterday, as I was coming in?"

"I don't know what time you returned, but Mr. Barton called yesterday; so I dare say it was."

"He is here pretty much every day, is he not?" asked Eustace, drily.

"Yes! he is very goodnatured," observed Millicent: "he does many little commissions for me, and he is so fond of Clarence."

"Indeed!" returned Eustace, sarcastically.

Millicent looked into his face with a puzzled, inquiring air. What did Eustace mean? Did he not like Mr. Barton? If he did not, she would not admit him. Mr. Barton might go

and discover the rocks in the moon for what she cared for seeing him again. She looked at her husband, but he was deep in the "Times." She was loth to disturb him, still she wished to understand his meaning; so, summoning her courage, she said, hurriedly:—

"Perhaps you do not like Mr. Barton calling here so often? If so, I can easily give orders not to be at home next time he comes."

"By no means," said Eustace, with studied politeness, and rising to depart: "at least, not to please me. You must be the best judge of the propriety of any friendships you may form." And so saying, he left the room.

Millicent pondered over her husband's words long after he had left, and it was with an uncomfortable feeling which she could not define that she heard Ward announce Mr. Barton.

He entered with his usual soft, stealthy tread. He was come determined to make a grand effort to secure his prize. Mrs. Vere had written to him that very day, hinting that from what she had gathered from a friend, who knew Millicent intimately, she should say, she was decidedly smitten. "You have only to go in and conquer," wrote she; "and

surely never man will have achieved a greater triumph."

So Mr. Barton could not rest till he heard his name announced in Millicent's drawing-room. Then, when he looked upon her beautiful face, he felt, that to be assured of the love of such a matchless creature would be the crowning triumph of his life.

Full of these thoughts, he really was lost in abstraction, and gazed upon her with such persistency, that at last she began to have suspicions of his sanity; and, full of her husband's recent remarks, fancied they might have reference to that distressing malady.

This new idea filled her with uneasiness, and she remained as silent and as abstracted as he was; always, however, keeping a watchful eye upon the young Clarence, who was amusing himself with building a house for her to live in, thinking, in case of the worst, she could snatch him up and fly out of the room.

This uncomfortable silence lasted some little time; when Mr. Barton, thinking that "faint heart never yet won fair lady," advanced towards her, and dropping suddenly upon his knees, gasped out, as if in apparent agony:—

"I can keep my secret no longer,—my

heart is bursting; amiable, beauteous, adored Millicent, I love you!"

Millicent started with affright, and rose hastily from her seat, firmly believing that he was attacked by the dreaded insanity she had apprehended; and catching up the startled Clarence was about to rush away, when his looks stopped her. The first glance from his licentious eyes undeceived her in a moment. Her husband's warning was now fully explained. She gathered herself up to her fullest height; looked at him as he lay at her feet with an intensity of scorn, beneath which even his audacious spirit quailed; then her lips parted, and she said:—

"Rise!"

Very crestfallen and alarmed at the stern tone of her voice he obeyed, casting upon her, as he did so, mingled looks of submission and admiration. She waited till he was, to use a parliamentary phrase, fairly upon his legs. Then, without moving or turning her head, she rang the bell.

"My dear Mrs. Neville, what have you done?" said he, terrified out of his very life by the grand mistake which, too late, he saw he had committed; and never doubting but that

her husband was in his library, and would, at the instance of his incensed wife, break a horse-whip over his reverend shoulders. "My dear Mrs. Neville, pardon the impetuosity of feeling I have so imprudently betrayed; and believe me, that I entertain so profound an admiration of your character that I will never, never offend again. Pardon me—pardon me——"

Here the opening of the door cut short his asseverations.

Millicent had deigned no answer to his outpourings. She turned to Ward, and said, briefly,—"Open the door for Mr. Barton, and never admit him again."

Mr. Barton felt as if the ceiling of the room had fallen in and crushed him. He was thunderstruck—paralysed—his powers of speech were denied him. He saw nothing but Millicent's haughty, indignant countenance, the amazed servant's look of surprise; and snatching up his hat with the desperate feeling that he had made an irretrievable blunder, he followed the astonished domestic out of the room.

Such was the end of the Reverend Nathaniel Barton's wooing in Upper Brook Street.

CHAPTER XVI.

A TRIAL OF STRENGTH.

The door fairly closed upon her obnoxious visitor, Millicent tried to collect her scattered senses. She had settled Mr. Barton with the same womanly instinct as, in a lower grade of life, would have been displayed in a sound box on the ear,—pity that the reverend lover had not been in coarser hands, though, perhaps, the punishment he received was the severer of the two.

Millicent felt bewildered; what could have induced the little bald-headed man to make such an arrant goose of himself it was past her comprehension to understand. But for her unhappy frame of mind, and the uncomfortable sensation left by her husband's words, she could have laughed at the recollection of the ridiculous figure he cut, down upon his

knees, one fat hand upon his waistcoat, and the other held up in an imploring attitude as if beseeching her pity.

But she was not happy enough to laugh. She felt sure some suspicions had entered her husband's head, and she rapidly revolved over in her own mind the easiest method of undeceiving him; for, of course, she must tell him what had happened.

She would have felt like a guilty woman to have concealed one word from him; nevertheless, she shrunk from intruding herself upon his notice.

Oh, for the old days of confidence and love, when she would have watched for his return with impassioned eagerness, and flown into his arms, and hushed all her griefs upon his breast!

She sighed heavily; then roused herself. Where was the use of sighing? Sighs would not, could not recall the past. Nothing brings that back.

She sat musing dreamily over the past, present, and future, when she heard her husband's cabriolet stop at the door.

Her heart gave a sudden bound, and with no little trepidation she awaited his coming.

He came into the room with his usual indifferent air. On seeing her he stopped short, and said, in a half-abrupt manner:—

"I beg your pardon; I did not know you were here."

Millicent's spirit ached at this formal apology; but she had no time to waste, so answered promptly:—

"I have waited for you. I was just going to ring for Ward to know if you were come in. I want to speak to you."

She uttered these words very gravely; but, spite of her outward calmness, she trembled so, that she was forced to sit down.

She had risen when her husband came into the room.

"I am all attention," said Eustace, coldly. "Pray speak. What is it you have to say?"

"I will speak," returned she, more firmly, roused to something like self-command by his stinging indifference. "Mr. Barton has been here, and grossly insulted me."

"Well," said he, without moving a muscle of his face, "and I suppose you wish me to avenge you? But he is a man of peace; and, I fear, won't fight."

"Good heavens!" cried she, quivering, and turning as white as her dress. "You are not, surely, thinking of anything so horrible, so frightful, as fighting? Oh, Eustace! you would not do such a thing, would you?"

"Of course I should," returned he, apparently unmoved by her evident agitation; "but as he is a clergyman, I have no other resource than to give him a sound horse-whipping the first time I meet him."

"I hope you will do the best thing; and that is, leave him to the contempt he deserves. I have already ordered him out of the house, as you shall hear, if you will listen;" and, in hurried accents, she related her afternoon's adventure.

Eustace made no comment; but in his heart, though he gave no outward sign, he rejoiced and felt proud of his young wife, and her grave self-possession excited his respect; and but for his obstinate pride he could have taken her to his heart, and folded her to his breast with pleasure.

But his obstinacy was of that nature, that he could never make the first concession; and provoked with Millicent for not doing it for him, he answered rather sneeringly:—

"You seem to be so well able to take care of yourself, you hardly need my assistance. I am quite at a loss to know why you have told me all this."

"I have told you," returned Millicent, her indignation at his sarcastic speech stirring up every drop of blood in her body. "I tell you, not from any hope of sympathy on your part, but because I feel convinced in my own mind that Mr. Barton has been set on by Mrs. Vere. She it was who introduced him here; and, under pretence of calling to see her, he gained the footing that enabled him to insult me as he did."

"How dare you accuse Mrs. Vere of any such connivance?" returned Eustace, wrathfully. "Because this Mr. Barton happens to be a friend of hers, is she to be suspected without cause? Am I not a friend also? I wonder you don't accuse me! No, it is your hellish jealousy," pursued he, in a loud tone, as a dim suspicion that Millicent might be right dawned upon his brain; and he wished, by talking loud, to drown the disagreeable truth. "Because you have taken it into your head to give way to unfounded jealousy, and

behave in a most unbecoming manner to me —unbecoming, both as a wife and a mother. Not satisfied with destroying my domestic peace—not content with making yourself an object of pursuit to a worthless villain, you add to your misdeeds by trying to shift the blame of what you have brought on yourself, upon the shoulders of an innocent, unoffending woman, like Mrs. Vere!"

Eustace spoke in such a violent rage, that he was forced to pause and take breath. Millicent could not believe her ears. Was she awake, or was she dreaming? Could it be really true that her husband, after all that had passed, could thus defend the conduct of Mrs. Vere? She felt her spirit rise, and answered proudly:—

"As to Mrs. Vere, I should think the less you said about her the better: it can neither redound to your credit nor hers!" And after delivering herself of this speech, she rose to quit the room.

"Stay!" thundered Eustace; and, alarmed at his violence, she turned round. "Come here!" cried he, in a hoarse voice, "and listen to the fate you have brought upon yourself."

Millicent hardly understood what he meant, nevertheless she tremblingly obeyed.

"Now, hear me!" said he, in tones so icy, that they froze the very blood in her veins; "hear my fixed and final resolution! Mark my words! we never are more to each other than we are at this moment! and as soon as that child," pointing to his boy, "grows to a legal age, I take him from you and give him to Mrs. Vere, who will teach him to love, not to hate, his father; and, thank God!" added he, with a concentration of bitterness, "there are no more to take after their unworthy mother!"

Millicent stared at him in wild affright. Her eyes were fixed and stony. The whole of his speech was lost upon her, save the conclusion. What! take her boy from her! her darling, her idolised boy! And, O God of heaven! was it possible she heard aright? Give him to Mrs. Vere! She fell upon her knees and faltered out:—

"Eustace, have pity! Show mercy! Do not threaten me with the loss of my child! He is all I have left to me! If I lose him, I shall die!—I shall die!" and giving way to her feelings, she sobbed aloud.

The young Clarence, who all this time was playing about the room, seeing his mother on her knees, and crying, came up, and putting his little arms round her neck, kissed her. She clasped him convulsively to her breast, and holding him up to his father, sobbed out:—

"Eustace, you once loved me, and that not so long ago as to be forgotten! By the memory of that love, I implore you to recall your cruel words, and leave me my child—our child!" added she, humbly; "and do not judge me so harshly as to suppose I will bring him up to do aught but love and respect you!"

"I will take very good care that you do not!" said Eustace. "I am sure your condescension is wonderful! But I should have thought you knew me well enough by this time to feel sure that what I say I keep to. I shall not abate one inch, neither shall I condescend to use my power until I can use it legally. I don't want to have your cousin, the great Mr. Norman Austin, launching his marvellous eloquence against me in Westminster Hall, and denouncing me as a monster for taking a child from its mother!"

"You judge wrongfully," answered Millicent, sorrowfully. "Norman is the last person who would say an unkind word about you, and he would be the last person," continued she, their never-to-be-forgotten interview flashing on her mind and dyeing her cheek with scarlet, "to whom I should apply. No!" added she, firmly, "do what you will, say what you will, I will never complain!"

"How good we are!" returned he, sneeringly. "I thought we meant to tell our father and mother, if our child was touched!"

"I own I said so," returned she, tears, in spite of herself, again gathering in her eyes; "but, Eustace, I have thought much since that fatal night, and I now see that it is not the duty of a wife to complain of her husband."

"You do, do you? Unfortunately, the knowledge has come too late; and I am afraid I have a bad taste, and don't care for fine speeches. One act of obedience, in my eyes, is worth all the speeches and tears in the world!"

Millicent groaned inwardly. She knew that her husband was wrong, and she right; but she knew also, that no power on earth

would make him confess that he had injured her, and her woman's heart clung to him, spite of his sins, his faults, and his temper. She fancied, too, she saw on his part a wish to make it up, even in the midst of his tempestuous wrath, and her wife-like affection for her husband began to stir vividly at her heart, and set aside her motherly love. Besides, the fault that had seemed so heinous a short time before, had greatly lessened in its apparent enormity; it had gone into that repository of all joys and sorrows, the dim, dim past. It is true she had counted upon forgiving him; of enacting a magnanimous part in the domestic drama she fondly hoped would take place. And now—now she was upon her knees, a poor palpitating suppliant to the very husband who had so injured her!

Truth—bitter truth—but truth, nevertheless; and a woman who has, or fancies she has, a wandering husband, better cut her right hand off, than endeavour to fathom or unravel the truth of her suspicions.

Had Millicent, the night of the discovery, returned to her own room, accepted her husband's version of the story, and quietly taken judicious measures to rid herself of her un-

welcome rival, she would not be in the miserable position we now find her; for it is no use disguising the fact, rightful as a woman's cause of complaint may be, she is as powerless in the hands of her husband as a newborn babe.

Millicent had felt this throughout the whole of this trying scene; and when her husband repeated so emphatically the words, "one act of obedience," she raised her head and said:—

"Name in what particular you wish me to obey you, and, if compatible with truth and honour, I will."

"You pay your husband a great compliment, in supposing he would ask you to do anything incompatible with those two great principles of life. However, we won't split hairs or quarrel about words. Own that you have wrongfully injured Mrs. Vere by your injudicious suspicions—that you are sorry for having suspected me also—me, your husband; and that, as the only atonement for such conduct, you will write to Mrs. Vere and tell her this, and ask her to show her forgiveness by coming back to you."

Millicent could hardly keep silence while

her husband, in the coldest tones, repeated these words. Her spirit rose in defiance; proudly she got up off her knees, looked him full in the face, and said:—

"Never!—Never!—I would rather die than tell such a falsehood!"

"Be it so!" cried he, in a tone so loud, that it sent Mr. Ward, who was assiduously applying his ear to the drawing-room key-hole, off in a trice, fearing that his impetuous master would be through the door ere he could get to the bottom of the stairs. "Be it so!" repeated he; "then this ends all intercourse between us for ever and for ever."

Very lucky for Mr. Ward that he had departed; for the next instant Eustace had dashed open the door, and darted out upon the landing. Slowly did Millicent follow, with her child in her arms, and totter up-stairs to her room. All her happiness was over in this world. Her husband was lost to her for ever—a very few years, and her child would be so likewise. She had nothing to live for—nothing to hope for. She had preferred this man to her cousin Norman; she had exulted in her choice; she had loved him as woman

rarely loves in this world. And this was her reward! Her cup of misery was full; a cold, dull weight rested upon her heart; and, like all novices in misfortune, she prayed for death to release her from her sufferings.

END OF VOL. I.

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